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POSTHUMOUS WORKS

OF THE

REV. RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.

EDITED BY HIS SON,

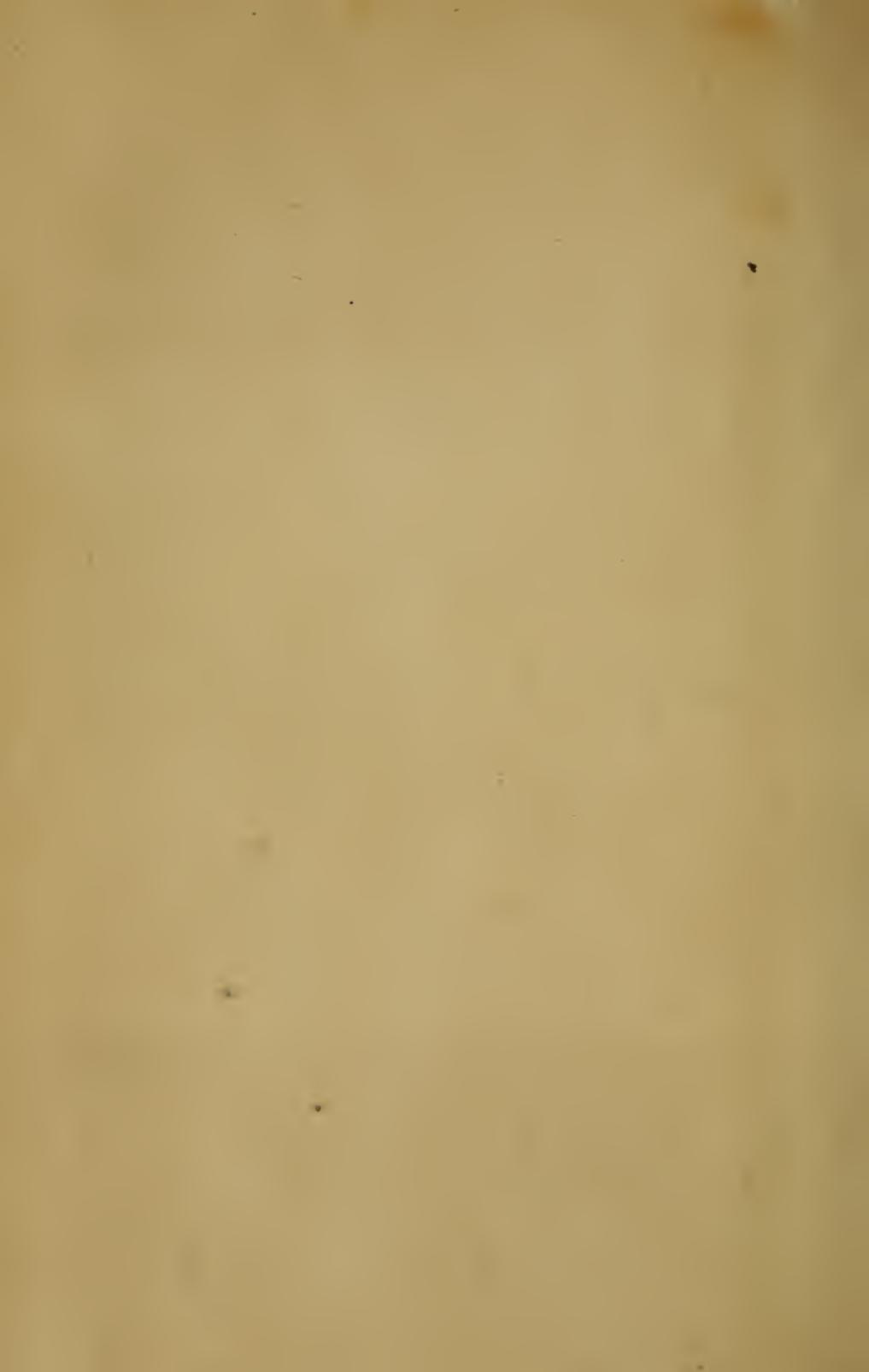
THE REV. J. S. WARDLAW, A.M.

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LECTURES

ON THE

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS,

BY THE



REV. RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.

EDITED BY HIS SON,

THE REV. J. S. WARDLAW, A.M.

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LECTURE XXIV.

ROMANS v. 12—21.

(THIRD DISCOURSE.)

“ Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ:) Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

WE must now consider the question:—What is implied in the “DEATH” incurred by the first transgression—the death threatened in the original sentence:—“In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die?”

I am fully convinced, and the more so the more I consider the subject, although not insensible to its difficulties, that this death comprehends, according to the commonly received

hypothesis, death spiritual, death temporal, and death eternal. By spiritual death I mean the entire loss in the soul of those principles of holiness which fitted man originally for fellowship with God as his chief joy, his happiness, his life. It is death to all those spiritual sensibilities of holy love which constituted the blessedness of the paradisaical life while man remained in his innocence, and a consequent total incapacity for the functions and enjoyments of that life. By temporal death I mean, of course, the dissolution, by whatever means effected, of the soul and the body, and the corruption of the latter in the grave, its return to the dust from which it was taken. By death eternal, I understand what is called in Scripture "the second death," the everlasting misery of the future state.

A few remarks will be necessary on each of these.

1. Against the idea of *spiritual* death being included in the curse, two objections have been urged—

(1.) It has been alleged that spiritual death is nothing more than sin, and that this is therefore to make sin its own penalty; and by supposing God to inflict it makes Him its author.* But here there is a double mistake. Is there no difference between falling into sin, and being left, in consequence, to a permanently depraved state of soul, a state of alienation from God and of incapacity for enjoying Him? The only question is:—Whether, in consequence of the original transgression, the nature of man was left in this state? That it was, we formerly endeavoured at great length to prove, from Scripture and from facts. Now, if this was a consequence, what else could it be than a penal and judicial consequence?

(2.) It has been objected that spiritual death is the very state which sinners love, and cannot, therefore, be considered

* The former part of this objection is stated in these strong terms: "Death spiritual is nothing more or less than the sin itself, for sin is the shutting out of God from the heart, and that is shutting out spiritual life. And therefore if I am told that spiritual death is the punishment of sin, I might answer, then sin is the punishment of spiritual death, for they are one and the same thing."—Erskine's *Introd. Essay to Letters by a Lady*, p. 47.

as properly of the nature of punishment to them. The fallacy of this is still more obvious. It was not to Adam as a sinner that spiritual death, supposing it to have been included, was threatened. It was to Adam when he was holy and spotless, unstained by any taint of evil, but, on the contrary, loving God and finding his felicity in holy fellowship with Him. To such a creature there could be nothing more dreadful or appalling than the thought of being alienated from God, and being under the sway of the principles of rebellion against Him. The very thought of being separated from Him, and being left in this state of separation, with an estranged heart, neither loving Him nor enjoying His love! We should consider, not what a sinful creature thinks of this, but what must be thought of it by a creature yet holy. That a sinful creature is not affected by it, cares not for it, desires no change, but even loves to have it so, what is this, but a description of the very evil itself in question? This insensibility to the loveliness of moral and spiritual beauties, and to the delights of holiness and of fellowship with a holy God; this earthliness of affections, this love of sin, this aversion to good that prevents the fallen creature from feeling spiritual death to be an evil, what is all this, but spiritual death itself? And is it not an evil? In the eyes of God and of all holy creatures it must appear the very worst and most pitiable of evils. The creature left in this state must be regarded as having sustained an infinite loss, and as having brought upon itself the very essence of misery. Nothing can be more fallacious than to make the creature itself under the influence of the obliquity of judgment, and insensibility of heart arising from sin, the referee upon the question:—Whether that state which he loves be or be not an evil and a penalty? Whatever the infatuated sinner himself may say; to have all evil passions, and affections, and desires, summed up in enmity against God, wrought into the very texture of the soul for ever, is, beyond question, the most perfect curse which the mind, properly enlightened, can imagine to itself.

2. As regards *temporal* death:—It is, by every one who

holds the imputation of Adam's sin in any degree to his posterity, admitted to be included in the penal results. But there are some who consider it as *all* that was meant when God said—"Thou shalt die." This sentiment requires some notice. It appears to me, then—

(1.) That those who conceive temporal death to be the amount of the curse which came upon Adam and his posterity by sin, do not think well what temporal death is; and that, by not considering of this, they involve themselves in a curious dilemma. What is temporal death? It is the dissolution of the soul and the body. We know what becomes of the body; what the effect of temporal death is as to it. But the body, the mass of inert and insensible matter, and at length the handful of dust, is comparatively nothing. Our supreme solicitude is about the soul, the deathless spirit! What is the clay tenement compared with its immortal inhabitant? What effect, then, has temporal death on the soul? When dislodged from the body is it happy or is it miserable? Here is the dilemma. If the soul, in its state of separation, be happy, then all the evils consequent on sin, all the penal fruits of transgression, are confined to this life and to the body. The soul partakes not of "the wages of sin," and it needs, therefore, no redemption. If, on the other hand, the soul in its separate state be miserable, then we have "the second death," the very thing which the hypothesis denies to be any part of "the wages of sin" (as consisting in the "transgression of the law.") So that, to talk of temporal death being the amount of the curse, is to talk without thought and without meaning; and to talk of redemption by Christ from the curse being redemption from temporal death is to talk as inconsiderately. Questions incomparably the most important,—those which regard the soul,—are thus left without a solution; for, as I have said, either when the soul quits the body, it is happy (and if happy, holy) or it is miserable. If the former, it needs no redemption, and the entire results of the mediation of Christ are confined to the body; if the latter, what is the misery of the soul but the very

eternal or second death, which the hypothesis denies to have formed any part of the curse?

Nay, more; redemption from the curse must be commensurate with the extent of the curse; so that, the curse being the death of the body, the full extent of redemption must be the redemption of the body; in which case no redemption is provided for the miserable soul. The price has been paid for infinitely the least precious part of the man. The dust is redeemed at an infinite cost from its prison, where it might have slept for ever in unconsciousness and insensibility, incapable either of suffering or of enjoyment, neither enduring the one nor aware of its loss of the other; while the never-dying spirit, with all its immortal sensibilities and capacities, is left in irremediable impurity and woe. What is to be done with the unredeemed soul, when the redeemed body shall be raised up to receive it? Who does not perceive the inconsistencies and difficulties which have been mentioned in reading such a statement as the following:—"The death denounced by the law was just the separation of soul and body. This does not, however, make the penalty nugatory; for the soul which had shut God out must have been miserable in its state of separation from the body." What is this but to say, that but for this misery of the soul the penalty would have been nugatory; and yet this misery of the soul is not allowed to have constituted any part of the penalty. What is it but denying and admitting, in the same sentence, that the soul's misery forms part of the legal penalty of sin as well as the death of the body? Yet after having said this, the author goes on to say further:—"This was the sentence on the whole race; and whilst it remained unreversed, it must have kept every man in his grave; it must have lain upon every man like a tombstone, and kept them down; no one would have risen. But if death be the penalty, resurrection is the reversal of the penalty. And what is pardon but the reversal of a penalty? It is true, then, of every man who is to be raised from the dead, that with regard to him the sentence of the law is reversed, or, in other words, that he is pardoned. But we know that there is to

be a resurrection of the whole race, both of the just and of the unjust. Every man is to be raised, the unbeliever as well as the believer. So that, with regard to every man, the penalty of the law is reversed, that is, that he is pardoned. And thus we see the meaning of the text,—‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.’”* But is it not a marvellous thing that the poor miserable soul has in this argument slipped out of remembrance, and the attention has been confined to what, independently of that misery, is admitted to be “nugatory.” Here, again, is the dilemma. When Christ, as Mediator, redeems from the curse, the penalty is reversed, the whole penalty, and with regard to every man. Either then, in this reversal of the penalty, the deliverance of the soul from its misery is included, or it is not. If it be not, then what have we? All men redeemed from the nugatory part of the curse, and left under its infinitely more fearful part; the body redeemed and the soul left in its wretchedness: and if it be, then we have all mankind not merely pardoned, and left notwithstanding in danger of perishing, but fully and eternally saved in body and soul together. It is evident that every scheme which confines the curse to temporal death, and Christ’s redemption to redemption from the grave, leaves the immortal soul unprovided for.

The necessity has been keenly maintained of the threatening, whatever it was, being executed in its full extent upon all; and the impossibility of any other arrangement consistently with the divine veracity. On this ground it is argued that temporal and spiritual death alone, not eternal death, were meant in the original threatening, inasmuch as these are what, in point of fact, do actually come upon all. “Had eternal death been the penalty, Adam himself at least must have died eternally; and, if the denunciation given upon the transgression extends to all his posterity, as appears by the event it did, not one of them could have been saved without dispensing with the unalterable divine consti-

* Erskine, *ut supra*, pp. 48, 49, &c.

tution, or somehow changing the tenor of it; an absurdity which can never be admitted on any consideration whatever. That original life must be destroyed; nor can the original law be satisfied by any means whatsoever until that is done; but when it is done, and that law thereby fulfilled, there is nothing to hinder the Creator to raise whom He pleases to eternal life."* By this kind of reasoning it is manifest all men without exception would necessarily be excluded from the possibility of salvation, inasmuch as it seems to proceed upon the assumption that the truth or veracity of Jehovah binds Him, in all cases, to execute His threatened penalty in the person of the offender. For what are the terms of the sentence of the law? "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."†

Now this curse manifestly includes all the evil from which sinners are redeemed by Christ. The subsequent verse sufficiently proves this:—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us." But according to the reasoning of Mr. R., we cannot, with any propriety, be said to be redeemed from eternal death at all. On the supposition of the effects of the original transgression coming upon the race of mankind in the limited sense which he supposes, then there are only two cases which appear imaginable. The body dies; dissolution takes place between it and the soul. What, then, becomes of the soul? Does it continue to exist? If it does, is it in such a state of spiritual death as he admits the curse to imply? If it be, then it must be in a state of misery; this being inseparable from every idea we can form of spiritual death, which includes or consists in alienation from God. And were the soul to continue for ever in that state, what would that be, short of eternal death, which, notwithstanding, he denies to be contained in the curse? Is the soul, on the other hand, after its dissolution from the body, in a state of happiness? Then it follows

* Riccalton's Works, vol. ii. ch. iv. Edin. 1771.

† Gal. iii. 10.

that the curse, in the most essential part of it, is removed, independently of any such mediatorial provision as the Gospel reveals. Or, is the soul to be annihilated along with the body, and the man to cease to be? Then the sequence is, that all from which, in strict correctness of speech, we can be said to be redeemed by the mediation of Christ, is the cessation of being—annihilation; a state (if a state it can be called) of entire and perpetual unconsciousness; so that we are redeemed from nothing, on the one side, of the nature of suffering; while if, by unbelief, we reject the salvation, we expose ourselves, as the punitive consequence, to sufferings unutterable and everlasting.

There are only three conceivable senses in which the threatening of death can be understood. It must mean either—i. Annihilation, the entire cessation of being; or ii. Temporal death, with the soul in a state of future happiness; or iii. Temporal death, and the soul in a state of misery. The first of these is not pretended;* it certainly never formed any part of the divine intentions as to man. I have therefore said nothing of it. The second is embarrassed with all the difficulty and contradiction I have noticed. The third therefore appears, on every ground, the only true interpretation.†

(2.) The language of the passage before us (vers. 16—18) is too strong to be applied to temporal death only. The “condemnation” which is opposed to “justification of life” must include the whole sentence of death from which sinners are saved by Christ. Now, “justification of life” has reference assuredly to more than the resurrection of the body; even to the eternal life or happiness of the whole man; and therefore the death that is opposed to this cannot be temporal death only. This view is confirmed by comparing verse 21 with ch. vi. 23. The death to which “sin reigns” is that from which “reigning grace saves,” and it stands in antithesis to “eternal life.” It

* It is, in these days, more than pretended; it is earnestly maintained by some, though we humbly think, with but a poor show of argument.—ED.

† Dwight's Theology, ser. xxviii. vol. i. p. 221.

must be more than the death of the body. This is peculiarly manifest when the preceding verses are taken in. “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”* The death, which is “*the end*” of the service of sin, cannot be temporal death merely, for this plain reason, that temporal death is equally the end of the service of God. In this respect the distinction fails. A distinction is evidently intended. The antithesis is pointed. The death is opposed to everlasting life; and the final states of those who have been engaged respectively in the opposite services are unquestionably meant to be expressed. There is no distinction otherwise.

(3.) It appears a very insufficient ground on which to rest the conclusion that temporal death was all that was included in the threatening,—that temporal death only is mentioned in the curse pronounced on man when he had fallen.† But there is no necessity nor good reason for supposing that all that was threatened is here exhausted, or that the extent of the evil threatened is fully brought forward. There is good and very pleasing and interesting ground for thinking the contrary. Mark the time at which this sentence on Adam was pronounced. It was subsequently to the promise of a Saviour and of life. Do not we perceive in this a satisfactory and delightful reason why that part only of the threatening should be now mentioned which was to continue as to himself and as to all his posterity; what was to be their common or universal lot, that of the woman’s seed as well as of the serpent’s? Had the curse in its full extent been still denounced, it might have seemed inconsistent with the grace of the promise which had just been given. It is conceived, with much probability too, by very eminent interpreters, that it was in the same connection Adam gave his wife her new name.‡ In the sense of being the mother of mankind, of “all living,” considered simply as her descendants, she was

* Verses 21, 22.

† Gen. iii. 17, &c.

‡ Gen. iii. 20.

to be so from the first, so that there was in this no reason for a new name. But the promise had just been given of the seed of the woman, in virtue of whose coming and work she was to be the mother of spiritual children, of all those who were to have life through Him. "No person who considers circumstances can doubt that the bruising of the serpent's head strongly expresses what the Apostle John makes the Son of God's errand into the world, 'to destroy the works of the devil.'* The works of the devil are sin and death; and when these are destroyed, nothing then remains but pure life. Thus, destroying the works of the devil is of the same import, with that saying of our Lord that, having life in himself, he came to give eternal life to as many as would receive it at his hands. That Adam took it thus seems pretty plain from the name he gave his wife upon that occasion. She was to be the mother of all living before she got her name; but now she was to be the mother of that seed who had all life in Himself, and from whom it was to be conveyed to those who were dead in trespasses and sins; she was constituted the mother of all life, as the original word imports; as it is by Him, and by Him only who raises the dead, that the man, who certainly must die, can live for ever."†

(4.) It seems to me to indicate an estimate by far too low of the guilt of sin on the one hand, and of the efficacy of the atonement of Christ on the other, to consider temporal death as the whole of the curse which has come upon men on account of it, and from which the interposition of the Son of God, by His incarnation and obedience unto death, saves them. Those who hold this do not deny that there is any such thing as the second or eternal death; but they deny its coming upon men on account of their transgressions of God's law, reserving it as exclusively the punishment for the rejection of the Gospel. If this appears to indicate a strong impression of the guilt of unbelief, it is far from indicating a

* 1 John iii. 8.

† Riccalton's Works, vol. i. p. 261. See also Edwards on Original Sin, pp. 202, 205, where the subject is treated at length, and reasons very satisfactory assigned for understanding the name in this way.

sufficient sense or admission of the evil that is in sin, as transgression of the Law. And there appears to me, moreover, a very strange incongruity in making the consequences of rejecting the remedy not merely exceed, but exceed by even infinite degrees, the evils from which the remedy was intended to deliver. I can neither imagine that the curse of sin, as committed against an infinitely great and good Being, should be exhausted in mere temporal death; nor that a scheme so full of divine wonders as the incarnation, and sufferings, and death of the Son of God, should have been carried into accomplishment, when the object was to redeem from no more than the loss of the body in the grave. The scheme itself is so transcendently vast, as almost to stun one's mind into incredulity by its very greatness. And when we are taught to think that the object was not the redemption of lost souls from eternal perdition, but only the deliverance of inanimate bodies from the corruption of the grave, we seem to feel as if the expenditure were prodigiously beyond the object attained by it. It is said of Him, that "being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."* Was all this only to save from temporal death, or from the effects of the curse upon the body? It is said of Him:—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."† Certainly the perdition from which He came to redeem sinners, was a perdition to which sinners were previously exposed, not the perdition which they were to incur by rejecting Him. Was this perdition, then, no more than the loss of the mortal, insensible, and comparatively worthless bodily frame? If so, and eternal death, the irrecoverable ruin and misery of soul and body in hell, is to be the effect of unbelief, of refusing the offered

* Phil. ii. 6, 8.

† John iii. 16.

deliverance, what an impression is this fitted to make! That the certain endurance of the death included in the curse might have been preferable to the tremendous risk incurred by disregarding the deliverance from it! It is obvious that we cannot be redeemed from more than is included in the curse. If that curse be temporal death, temporal death must be all from which the “redemption that is in Christ”* provides deliverance. What consistency, then, is there in the hypothesis, that we incur more, even infinitely, by our unbelief than we escape by our faith. There is, in that case, to those who believe, a comparatively small deliverance; whilst to those who believe not, there is an infinite augmentation. However heavily aggravated the guilt of unbelief (and I believe it to be the greatest of all the sins of men), yet it is a melancholy view given by this hypothesis, that the death which is incomparably the most fearful, compared with which the other is as nothing, should owe its existence entirely to the mediation of Christ; should not be at all that from which it achieves deliverance, but that to which the refusal of it exposes; so that the amount of woe is greater by infinitude in consequence of Christ’s work, than it would have been had he never come into our world; for there would then have been nothing of the nature of eternal misery. The “second death” had been unknown.

We have before seen, that the death spoken of throughout the Bible “as the wages of sin,”* is something more than temporal death. Many are the passages that might be added to these in proof of the same position. It is wonderful, indeed, that any man, with the Bible in his hand, should ever entertain the notion that “the second death” is exclusively the punishment of unbelief of the Gospel, and not of the transgression of the Law.†

Now, if eternal death be a part, and beyond all comparison the chief part, absorbing all the rest as unworthy to be named or noticed along with it, then we may be assured it was meant

* Rom. iii. 24. † Chap. vi. 21, 23.
† Rev. xx. 14; xxi. 8; Eph. v. 3, 6, &c.

in the original threatening. For it cannot reasonably be supposed, that when God gave His laws to man, enforcing obedience by a threatened penalty, there should nothing be included in it of the chief part of the penalty; that death should mean, not what it means in the rest of the Scriptures when expressing “the wages of sin,” but something infinitely less considerable. This is quite inconceivable. It would be as if, amongst men, a law were passed prohibiting a crime on pain of a trifling pecuniary fine or short imprisonment; and when the act was committed, it should turn out that, besides this, the forfeiture of life was tacitly included by the enactors of the law, although it had not been expressed! This would be strange procedure on the part of any earthly government; how much more on the part of the divine!

3. Respecting *eternal* death, we may observe, that in speaking of it as the penalty of sin, we are exceedingly apt to forget one thing:—I mean the variety of degrees of which it is susceptible. When we speak of the entire penalty of transgression, the phrase sounds as if, in every case of sin or trespass, there were signified by it a fixed and definite thing, the same in amount. But we know for certain, that this is not true. It is not true in regard to the guilt of different persons in the commission of actual transgression. The sacred Scriptures assure us, that various measures of punishment shall be allotted to various degrees of criminality.* It is the doctrine of Scripture, and the dictate of reason, that “some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.”† And if not equally heinous, it follows that they cannot infer the same amount of punishment. When, therefore, it is further said, that “every sin deserves God’s wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come,”‡ we ought to bear in mind that the terms “wrath and curse,” are not terms of precise and definite import, but susceptible of indefinitely various measures of amount.

* Luke xii. 47, 48; Rom. ii. 12, 16.

† Assembly’s Shorter Catechism, quest. 83. ‡ Ibid. quest. 84.

I make this remark here, because it is not only important in itself, but has a bearing on the most difficult of questions relative to our present subject, namely, the extent of *the imputation*, as it has been termed, of Adam's first sin to his posterity; by which phrase I would be understood simply to mean the extent to which penal consequences should be considered as arising from it to the race of his children. This is a subject respecting which there is but little said in the Scriptures; and respecting which it therefore becomes every one to speak with humility and diffidence. To affirm that Adam did not stand and fall for his posterity at all, and that no penal consequences whatever overtake them on account of the sin by which he apostatized from God, is, as we formerly saw, to resist the language of the plainest facts.*

In the present instance, the question how far the application of the principle reaches, is one of no little difficulty; and, perhaps, it is one which it is not necessary for us definitely to determine.

There are two opinions; the first that Adam so stood for his posterity, that his first sin affected them all exactly to the same amount in which it affected himself; just as if each had existed, and taken part in it at the time: all becoming, on account of it, liable to eternal, as well as to temporal death. The second, that the imputation of his sin extends no further than to temporal death, including the sufferings of this life; while eternal death is to every man the consequence of his own actual transgressions. There is a third view, indeed, which denies that eternal death was included in the curse at all, either to Adam or his posterity; or that it arises at all from transgression of the Law, but is exclusively the punishment of unbelief, or the rejection of the Gospel. But this we have already disposed of.

With regard to these two views of the matter, it is obvious that the mere circumstance of temporal death only being meant in verse *fourteenth*, does not decide the point. It does not at all follow, that because temporal death only is

* See preceding Lect.

meant in that verse, it alone must be meant throughout the passage; for when a curse is one, but consists of various parts, we may prove a person to be a subject of all, by showing, from palpable and notorious facts, that he suffers a part. Thus the Apostle may be considered as selecting the proof from temporal death, as being obvious and visible, to demonstrate, from its universal reign, the principle of the universal inclusion of the race in the denunciation against the original transgression.

On the other hand, it seems to be going too far to affirm that the distinction made by the other hypothesis (which supposes the original transgression to affect the posterity of Adam only in regard to temporal sufferings and death, leaving eternal death to be incurred by the actual transgressions of each) removes not in any degree the difficulty, because it admits the principle of one man's sin penalty affecting others; and if the principle (it is alleged) be admitted, the difficulty is unaffected by the question of the extent of its application, inasmuch as it is as impossible for God, if the thing be unrighteous in itself, to be unjust in the least as in the greatest. This, I say, is pushing a principle, in itself correct, to an extreme. We can conceive of righteous and important ends answered by God's permitting certain consequences to arise from one man's sin to another; while we shrink from admitting this to the extent of the absolute loss of the happiness of the creature's whole being even for eternity, and the subjection of him, throughout that being, to irremediable misery. And yet again, on the other hand, it is alleged to amount to very much the same thing, whether the posterity of Adam be regarded as involved directly in his first sin, so that they became subject, on account of it, to all the amount of evil to which it subjected himself; or whether, in consequence of it, and that judicially and penalty (for it cannot be otherwise), his posterity are placed in circumstances which invariably issue in sin, and in constant exposure to the second death. The effect, it is said, is the same; only in the one case it is direct, and in the other indirect.

It appears a worse than idle and useless thing, it is perni-

nicious and illusory, to argue on mere suppositions in their nature impossible. Such a supposition is that of a child of Adam inheriting no depravity, and continuing consequently free of all actual sin, with the question founded upon it:—Would that child be liable to eternal death merely in virtue of his relation to Adam, on account of his first sin? There can be nothing so foolish as this pure speculation. We must take things as they actually stand. The posterity of Adam do inherit a depraved and guilty nature; and it is as inheriting this depraved and guilty nature that they are connected with him in the penal consequences; of which, indeed, this to them is one, and the introduction to all the rest. These things ought never to be separated in theory, as they never are in fact:—“A clean thing” cannot come “out of an unclean.”* If it were possible, we could have no hesitation in determining that the clean could not suffer on account of the unclean. But the inheritance of depravity and liability to punishment are, in point of fact, inseparable. And even on the supposition of the sin of Adam affecting the condition of his posterity in the future world, as well as in the present, we should be on our guard against the illusion before referred to, of thinking and speaking of “the second death,” as if it were a definite thing in the amount of suffering expressed by it. This, as was then observed, we know to be not true. It is not true in regard to the results of the actual characters of men, of their own sins; various measures of punishment being, according to the Scriptures, appointed to various degrees of criminality.† Now, if this be the case in regard to the actual sins of men; then, when we speak of the imputation of Adam’s transgression extending to the entire penalty, i. e., to the second death as well as the first; it does not follow that the second death, when considered as the penal consequence of Adam’s transgression, is at all the same in the amount of suffering involved in it, as when it is regarded as inflicted on account of their own actual guilt. Even in this view the imputation is susceptible of degrees; and no man

* Job xiv. 4.

† Luke xii. 47, 48; Rom. ii. 12, 16.

can, with any certainty, affirm (if I may so express myself) the extent of death which was connected by imputation with the fall of the federal head. Because, on the same principle on which all sins are not equally heinous, and all characters not equally sinful, and consequently not deserving the same amount of punishment, the amount may also be widely different, when considered as connected with the first sin of Adam, from what it is when considered as the punitive visitation of our own sins.

The proper question is:—*Whether the first sin of the first man was regarded as involving his posterity in guilt, so as to affect their eternal as well as their temporal condition?* In the order of nature, I think we ought to consider as first the inheritance of a depraved nature; the species liable to death as fallen and corrupt creatures, like their great progenitor, when by sin he had apostatized from God. In every such creature, too, it should be remembered, there is, in the very principles of its nature, and manifested as soon as these begin to unfold themselves, a consent of heart to the first sin. By every such creature, when it acts upon the principles of the original apostasy, the first transgression of that apostasy is appropriated, and made its own. The Jews did not “crucify the Lord of glory,”* I mean the now existing race of them. But they have in spirit concurred with their fathers in the deed. So, although the posterity of Adam have not each of them eaten of the forbidden tree, they have made the act their own by following out the principle of it. They may deny this; they may abjure the deed in words. But they abjure it merely because they suffer from it. They abjure it in a kind of unholy resentment for the penal consequences of it. “Their hearts fret” against Adam and against God. But actions speak more decisively than words. Those Jews in our Lord’s time, who said, “If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets,”† were themselves put to the trial, and they appropriated in action the very

* 1 Cor. ii. 8.

† Matt. xxiii. 30.

deeds which they abjured in words, themselves doing the same things. "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city."*

How far this consent of heart may be regarded as lying in the very principles of the fallen nature, and may be considered as even applying to those in whom these principles latently reside, although they have not yet begun practically to develop themselves, I cannot say. It may safely be pronounced an impossibility for us to tell the precise time, in the case of each child born into the world, at which personal moral responsibility commences. Some have argued for its beginning at the very moment of birth, or as soon as any indications of feeling or passion appear, the principles of the moral nature operating as early as those of the physical and intellectual. The question is one which, being incapable of an answer from any man's own experience, must remain without a satisfactory solution. That there may be such operation inwardly, earlier than we can discern it, cannot well be denied any more than affirmed. The nature of disposition, as the seat of innate depravity, we have before considered, and shown how difficult it is for us to say when disposition begins to show itself, and that it exists even previously to its manifestations. How then can we be sure how far the penal sufferings of which infants are the subjects, may not have their cause in the depravity of their nature as well as in their federal connexion with Adam. "If the doctrine of imputation means that for Adam's sin alone God inflicts the penalty of the law upon any of his posterity, they themselves being perfectly sinless, then the doctrine in my view wants proof. There appears to be no place for such a doctrine, seeing all Adam's posterity are from the first morally depraved. And if they are allowed to be so, I know not why any man should think that God makes no account of their depravity in the sufferings which He brings upon them."† I know not either.

* Matt. xxiii. 34

† Dr. Woods of Andover, U. S.

The subject is one which, in various directions and bearings of it, lies very much out of our reach. I dare not question facts. By these we are, to a certain extent, constrained to admit a judicial connexion between Adam and his posterity; the latter involved in the consequences of the fall of the former. But the precise nature and exact extent of the connexion and its results are points of much difficulty. I cannot but think, that the language of our Lord bears me out in saying, that there is such a thing in the divine procedure (I am not speaking of the procedure of man, or advocating any right of man to act upon the principle, there being a wide difference between the judgment of omniscience and of ignorance), that there is such a thing as the regarding of men as partaking in the guilt of those who have preceded them in former generations; when by their own conduct they appropriate the principle by which their progenitors were actuated, and vindicate thus the actions which brought upon them their guilt. How early in the case of the posterity of Adam, anything of this kind may be considered as taking place, it is not for us to affirm. Dr. Woods seems to go to the extreme, when he contends for the exercise of moral principles from the very birth, taking ground which is hardly tenable. On the other hand, Dr. Payne seems to me to go too far in questioning, as he appears to do, the rectitude of the principle altogether.* And indeed, when I am asked the question:—How far infants are involved in the guilt of the first trespass, I feel inclined, after all the attention I have given to the subject, to answer:—“God knoweth.”† That they are involved we have seen; painful facts daily and hourly attest it. But whether they are involved in the curse beyond what these facts indicate, I cannot with confidence affirm. This I believe, and delight in believing, that to whatever extent the curse may reach them, they are all included in the efficacy of the redemption, amongst the objects of saving mercy. Their salvation is entirely on the ground of Christ's mediation. And I believe that even in heathen lands, He

* Congregational Lecture, ii. pp. 88, 90.

† 2 Cor. xi. 11.

makes His great Adversary outwit himself. The amount of infanticides produced by ruthless and unnatural superstition, has been fearfully great. But the Redeemer, without its in the least mitigating the atrocious guilt of the perpetrators, has thus, by means of idolatry itself, been multiplying the number of His subjects and peopling heaven. And a very large proportion, I doubt not, of the inhabitants of that happy world shall consist of

“Babes thither caught from womb and breast.”

I would entreat all to remember, that it is but little that is said in the sacred Scripture on the present subject. This is almost the only passage that formally or even incidentally speaks of it. Throughout the Scriptures, the perdition of men is associated with their own sins, and their own rejection of the remedy. There can be no question, that whatever amount of guilt Adam contracted by his first sin; had he continued impenitent and unbelieving, all his subsequent trespasses must have added to that amount. “The second death,” we have seen, is nothing so fixed and defined in its nature as to be incapable of augmentation. Think, then, of your own actual sinfulness and guilt. Whatever may be the amount of curse arising directly from your relation to the first sinner, O do not allow any speculations on a subject so full of mystery, to draw away your thoughts from the consideration of your actual guilt. Do not think hardly of God on account of His dealings towards you and towards the race. Be assured He is “the Judge of all the earth,” and has done and can do only that which is right.*

* Gen. xviii. 25.

LECTURE XXV.

ROMANS v. 12—21.

(FOURTH DISCOURSE.)

THE next subject, as already intimated, which the passage brings before us, is *the parallel and the contrast between the sin of the first Adam with its effects, and the obedience of the second Adam with its effects.* We shall first attend to the points of parallelism.

1. There is a parallel between the one and the other, such as exists between a type and its antitype, verse 14—“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that is to come.” Where, then, it may be asked, can be the parallelism? What resemblance is there between sin and obedience, between misery and death—the dreadful effects of the one, and blessedness and life—the happy results of the other? Here, it must be granted, there is no correspondence, there is perfect opposition. It is not in these things the parallel is to be found. In what, then, does it lie? It lies chiefly in one point; namely, that the first and second Adam acted each a public part, standing for others and not for themselves merely; a part from which important results were to arise to those whom they are considered respectively as representing.

In tracing this parallelism, the principal difficulty lies in ascertaining the import of the phrases by which the extent of the injury from the sin of the first Adam, and the extent

of the benefit from the obedience of the second, are here expressed. These phrases are on both sides the same:—“*the many*” and “*all men*.”* Surely, if there can be found a principle of interpretation, according to which these phrases may be understood on both sides with the same extent of meaning, this would bid fair to be the true one, inasmuch as such agreement cannot in candour but be admitted to be far more simple and natural, than understanding the same phrases with a latitude of import so much greater on the one side than on the other. This much, I think, ought to be at once conceded by every ingenuous inquirer.

Some, then, conceive that such a principle is to be found in what they think a right conception of the extent of the curse consequent on Adam's first sin. According to these interpreters, that curse consisted simply in temporal death, the dissolution of the soul and the body. Understand it so, they allege, and all is quite simple. All die in Adam; all are made alive in Christ. The resurrection from the grave is to be as universal as the death that commits to it. The death came by the first Adam, the resurrection comes by the second Adam. It is the death of all; it is the resurrection of all. This does, to be sure, sound very simple and very plausible; plausible from its very seeming simplicity. There are objections to it, however, which appear to me quite insuperable. They are such as these:—

(1.) What is temporal death? It is the dissolution of soul and body. Well, when soul and body are dissolved, what, according to this view of the curse, becomes of each? We know the effects as to the body—the inanimate, unconscious mass of clay; but what becomes of the soul? Here lies the difficulty; here the dilemma. For if the separate soul be miserable, then the curse, contrary to the hypothesis, consists in more than temporal death; and on the other hand, if the soul be happy (and if happy, holy) to what a light matter does this reduce the curse, and to what a light matter, consequently, redemption from it. On this account—

* Verses 15, 18, 19.

(2.) It appears to indicate by far too low an estimate both of the evil of sin, considered as transgression of the law, and of the redemption effected by the wonderful scheme of Christ's mediation, to consider temporal death as the full amount of the curse on account of the former; and deliverance from the grave consequently (for the deliverance from the curse must be commensurate with the extent of it) the full amount of the redemption effected by the latter. I can neither imagine, on the one hand, that the curse against sin can be exhausted in mere temporal death, considering the guilt of rebellion against infinite purity, authority and love; nor, on the other, that a scheme so full of divine wonders as the mediation of the Son of God should have no other design and no other effect than to rescue the body from the grave. Yet this must be all, if temporal death be all the curse.

(3.) Supposing the hypothesis true, that temporal death comes to all men by the first Adam, and the resurrection from that death comes equally to all by the second Adam, surely that which the Scriptures represent as coming to sinners by Jesus Christ must be a benefit. Now it is admitted that though the resurrection comes to all, it shall be to the impenitent and unbelieving not a resurrection to life, but a resurrection to damnation. But is this a benefit? It seems to me utterly vain to speak of the resurrection abstractly, or in itself considered, as a benefit. The resurrection cannot be so considered. The body lay in a state of absolute unconsciousness, and destitute of all sensation, and of all sense of the loss it had sustained. It rises to suffering, to endless suffering. By the re-union of the body and soul, therefore, there is nothing gained but an augmentation of suffering. I can regard it as nothing better than a mockery of the woes of the wretched victims of their own delusions, to speak of the resurrection as in these circumstances a benefit. O no! it is no benefit. The re-uniting of the body to the soul is only, by completing the man, augmenting his capabilities of suffering. The grave was, in regard to such, I hesitate not

to say, a blessing; and the resurrection a heavier curse than the death from which it sets free!

(4.) The resurrection of the wicked is but seldom spoken of in Scripture; and the simple term resurrection is most frequently used to signify resurrection to life, as if the other were not thought worthy of the name.* And here I may with propriety notice a passage considered by the advocates of the view on which I am now commenting, as an irrefragable proof of its correctness:—"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."† On this passage observe:—i. It is very unfair to consider it as a proof of temporal death being the amount of the curse; because, the resurrection being the Apostle's subject, he, of course, like a good reasoner, does not go beyond it, but keeps to the point in hand, which was disbelieved and ridiculed by the heathen philosophers; the scepticism (probably on this very account) had now found its way into the Corinthian church. He confines himself, therefore, to the death of the body. But no inference from his doing so could be more illegitimate and unreasonable than that the death of the body was the whole of the curse. It is of the body, not of the soul, that he is speaking. ii. The term *all*, according to a canon of interpretation simple and universally recognised, ought always to be understood as corresponding in the extent of its meaning with the subject of which the author is treating. What, then, is the subject of which the Apostle treats in these verses? It seems to me to be the resurrection of the just. It is true the general resurrection is involved in the conclusion from his argument. But his grand subject throughout the chapter is the resurrection to life; and we have here accordingly another instance in which the resurrection means the resurrection, not of all, but of the children of God.‡ iii. In this passage it may be observed there is the same reference, as in the one already under discussion, to the first and second

* Luke xx. 36; Phil. iii. 11. † 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23. ‡ vs. 21, 42, 19.

Adam. Although, therefore, it may be granted that in a certain general sense the resurrection of all the dead may be regarded as a part of the constitution of things resulting from Christ's mediation; yet the resurrection which is by Christ, compared with the death which is by Adam, ought to be considered as meaning, what alone is a blessing, and what alone is worthy of such peculiarly emphatic mention, the resurrection to life. iv. The meaning in these circumstances seems to be, since the Apostle is speaking of the resurrection of the just:—"As in Adam they all die, even so in Christ they shall all be made alive."* This is confirmed by what immediately follows.† Should any not be satisfied with this explanation of this passage, the difference will not at all invalidate the other objections to the doctrine or the principle of interpretation which we are considering. And respecting that principle I observe—

(5.) It appears to me impossible, without the most flagrant outrage on all just principles of explanation, that the phraseology of this passage,‡ in regard to the benefits resulting from the obedience of the second Adam, can be limited by the mere resurrection of the body from the grave, irrespectively of the eternal life beyond, or that it can at all be applied to all mankind. "The free gift," "the gift by grace," "justification," and "justification of life," as opposed to "judgment" and "condemnation," "receiving abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, and reigning in life by Jesus Christ;" these are expressions which, corresponding as they do to so many others which in other parts of Scripture are applied exclusively to the righteous, cannot at all be interpreted as fulfilled in all men, or as having their import exhausted by the resurrection of the body from the grave. And the truth of the remark is confirmed by the contrast,§ where the death to which sin has reigned is opposed to the life to which grace reigns. And the life is life eternal; a phrase which no one can misunderstand who carefully reads his Bible. Is the gift of God the free gift, the gift by

* v. 22.

† v. 23.

‡ Rom. v.

§ vs. 20, 21.

grace, to be restricted to the mere resurrection of the body, and considered as alike partaken by all men without exception? No; the next chapter tells us what the gift of God is:—"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life."* Is "justification" and "justification of life" no more than such a pardon as all receive; a pardon such as releases the body from the prison of the grave, and then leaves body and soul together to everlasting perdition? Ought this to have the name of a pardon at all? It seems an abuse of terms to call it so; for if temporal death be the amount of the curse, the curse is actually endured, the punishment is actually inflicted and sustained! What description of pardon is that to be called, according to which the whole sentence of condemnation is executed! I have been accustomed to consider pardon as an exemption from the penalty. When the death is considered as including the second or eternal death, there is exemption, exemption from all in the sentence that comparatively deserves to be named; but, on the other hypothesis, there is no exemption, and consequently no pardon; the penalty in all its extent is first inflicted, and then, when it is removed, it is only as introductory to something not included, but incomparably and even infinitely more fearful. Is this to be justified, justified unto life? And how is it in any way true of all men without exception that, having received the gift of righteousness, they "reign in life by Jesus Christ?" or that to all without exception "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life."

The question is:—Are these things true of all men? Is there any scriptural sense, or any sense at all in which they can possibly be affirmed of all men. There certainly is none. The Scriptures, while they affirm that he that believeth in the Son of God shall be saved, hath everlasting life, is passed from death unto life, and shall not come into condemnation, testify as explicitly that he that believeth not shall be condemned, is condemned already, shall not see life, that he that hath the Son hath life.†

* Rom. vi. 23.

† Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 18, 36; v. 20.

Is there, then, any other principle of interpretation, according to which the phrases "the many" and "all men" may be understood as of the same extent of meaning on either side, and yet the truth of the parallel maintained? I cannot help thinking that there is, and I now proceed to mention it. But before doing so, it is necessary for me to say, that I am not satisfied with the common interpretation of these universal modes of expression, as having different amounts of meaning corresponding to the bodies of which Adam and Christ are respectively considered as the heads or representatives; Adam of all mankind, Christ of the elect; Adam having stood for the whole of his offspring, Christ for the whole of the chosen children of God. I am dissatisfied with this for the reason already hinted at, that "the many," and especially the "all men" (for the word men is here in the original, which it is not in every instance in which we so translate), are phrases which it is harsh to interpret on the one side so extendedly, and on the other with so much limitation; and which it is very desirable, if possible, to explain alike.

What, then, if the phrase "ALL MEN" here means, as in some other places, not all men *without exception*, but all men *without discrimination*? The distinction is a simple one. Let us see what can be said for it, and how it suits in the present case:—

1. The phrase is frequently used in this sense, in connections, in which that which is affirmed is not true of all men without exception, but is true of all men without discrimination.* Jesus did not draw to Him all men without exception, but all without discrimination, men of every kindred and tongue and people and nation; His Gospel being meant not for Jews only, but for mankind without difference. "God will have all men to be saved;" that is, His salvation is for men indiscriminately: as is evidently the meaning from what follows, "and to come to the knowledge

* John i. 7; xii. 32; Acts xvii. 30, 31; Eph. iii. 9; 1 Tim. ii. 4; Tit. ii. 11, &c.

of the truth." His truth is designed for universal diffusion and universal influence. The context evidently favours the explanation (as candid interpreters on all sides of theological questions have admitted) of men of all kinds, all ranks and descriptions.

2. We have seen that the only sense in which the phrases can be taken on both sides without exception, the sense, namely, in which the extent of the curse is restricted to temporal death, is a sense that will not bear examination. And we have seen that, in their only scriptural acceptation, the terms representing the benefits of Christ's mediation are not with any truth applicable in point of fact to all men without exception. Yet I do think it evident, that we ought to consider Adam and Christ, as compared in regard to the really efficacious influence of their respective conduct, transgression on the one side and obedience on the other. It is true that the declaration of the righteousness of Christ is made, in the preaching of the Gospel, more extensively than its saving benefit is actually imparted. But even as to the declaration of the truth, we are under the necessity of limiting; inasmuch as, even in this view, the phrase, when taken strictly, is more extensive than the truth of the case. We are obliged to consider it as made to all men, not without exception (for millions never heard of it), but without distinction.* If then we are, at all events, necessitated to limit, the limitation should be made in consistency with the scope and connection of the passage and the purpose of the writer.

Now this leads me to notice—

3. That the view just given suits remarkably well the Apostle's object. The Jews made their boast in the Law. They looked on the Gentiles as sinners under God's curse, simply because they were not of the chosen people, and were without law; without the written law in which the Jews gloried. But Paul, as we formerly noticed, shows the Jews that their origin was the same as that of the Gentiles; that by the offence of one judgment came upon all men, upon the

* Chap. i. 16, 17.

one as well as the other, unto condemnation ; that in this respect there was no difference. So in like manner he shows them that the righteousness of one comes upon all men, without discrimination, unto justification of life ; that in the offer, and, what he has more especially in view, in the effectual bestowment of grace, there was “no difference between the Jew and the Greek ;” between “Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free.”

4. It is very true that, on the one side of the comparison, the death and the curse do, in point of fact, “come upon all men” without exception. But still this is no sufficient evidence that it may not be in the sense of “without difference or discrimination” that he means to institute the comparison ; for in this sense it is, without controversy, quite as true on both sides as it is true in the one without exception. If, when a parallel is drawn, and the same terms are used on both sides of it, there be two senses in which these terms may be understood, and the question is which of the two is the true one ; it is surely a fair principle of decision, that if, when understood in one of the senses, there is one side of the parallel to which they cannot, without unnatural straining, be applied ; while, when taken in the other, they are all, with equal truth and equal simplicity, predicable of both, and at the same time the parallelism thus expressed is equally to the purpose of the writer, the latter should be adopted as the preferable acceptation. Thus, I think, the case stands in the present instance :—“All men without exception” is true on the one side of the parallel ; but it is not true on the other :—“All men without difference” is equally true on both ; and the sense produced by so understanding it, is remarkably suitable to the object of the writer and the general scope of his discourse. And that it is in this view, and not in the other, that the Apostle means to compare them, we have strong evidence in the preceding part of the Epistle.* Here† we have the unlimited term “all” used where it may with truth be understood as meaning without exception ; but that the

* Chap. iii. 22—24.

† Ver. 23.

really intended and equally true meaning is without discrimination, appears from what immediately follows;* for were we to carry forward the universal term in the sense of without exception, we should have a statement contradictory to palpable fact, namely, that all who have sinned are actually made partakers of justification; the justification which is immediately declared to be by faith in Jesus Christ, by faith in his propitiatory blood. The meaning evidently is, that all without difference who are justified, are justified in the same way, "freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" that the Jew cannot be justified otherwise than the Gentile, and that by the Gospel the blessing was equally free to the Gentile as to the Jew.† I would have it further observed here, that the view I am now giving does not interfere with the universality of the atonement. The Apostle is here speaking, not so much of the atonement as of the actual effects of the atonement. The atonement was for all. It was made for the sins of all. But the saving effects of the atonement do not, in point of fact, come upon all men without exception. The very knowledge of it does not. But they do come upon all without discrimination. And with regard to all on whom the saving effects of the atonement do actually come, I cannot but believe there must have been, in the making of the atonement, a reference of special purpose and special love. I would not use the particular phrase "double substitution;" but I conceive there is a sense in which, with the fullest propriety, Christ may be said to have been a substitute for all, for mankind, and to have stood in the room of all, and endured the penalty due to their sins; while, at the same time, in regard to intentional efficacy, there was a restriction to a certain limited number.

This point of parallelism, as has been observed, is noticed in general terms in verse 14, and it is especially brought out in verses 18, 19. The verses were formerly explained, in speaking of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity,

* Verse 24.

† Verses 28, 30.

or the extent to which it brought penal consequences upon them. The doctrine taught is, that as men were brought by the one transgression of the first man into a state of judicial condemnation, so by the one righteousness of the second Adam men are brought into a state of pardon or justification and judicial acceptance with God. It makes no very material difference whether we render "by one offence" and "by one righteousness," or, as in our translation, "by the offence" and "by the righteousness of one." It may be observed, however, that some who contend for the former rendering, conceive that, to render the parallel perfect, we should understand one act of righteousness as corresponding with one act of transgression. This, however, is a very needless refinement. They conceive the one act of obedience to be the death of Christ. And it seems to be not merely a superfluous refinement, but moreover, to proceed upon a false principle with regard to what is necessary to condemn and to justify. The law righteously threatens death for one offence; but, on the contrary, a complete obedience, and not one act only, is necessary as the ground of acceptance and of life. And, without entering largely into the discussion about the active and passive obedience of Christ, I would say, it seems to give us a more complete and satisfactory view of the finished work of Jesus, when we consider Him as not only bearing the curse which forms the sanction of the Law, but also as rendering to its requirements that sinless obedience which, according to the original engagement of God, entitles to life. That the Lord our righteousness did render such a sinless obedience to all the great spiritual principles and requirements of the Law cannot be doubted.* The grand original law of love to God, and the second which is like unto it, love to man, were the uniform impulses of His whole course of active life and of patient suffering. It is very true that the death of Jesus is most frequently spoken of as the ground of justification; but this is accounted for from its being the grand closing scene or act of obedience. For even as to

* Isa. xlvi. 21.

atonement, all that Jesus suffered, as well as the last agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary, must have been vicarious. Perfectly free from sin, he could suffer nothing on his own account. And surely the perfect exemplification of the holiness which the Law requires may be regarded as part of the means by which the glory of God was secured in the exercise of His mercy to sinners. Too much, I admit, has been made by some, of what they have called the double demand of the Law; the demand of satisfaction for disobedience and of perfect obedience in addition as the condition of acceptance and life. They have insisted that a sinner by being interested in the atonement has only the penalty remitted; he wants that which can alone entitle him to life; he is merely delivered from condemnation, standing, as it were, in a neutral state, between death and life, freed from the sentence to the one, but in want of any positive ground on which he can enjoy the other. This seems over-refining. We can form no idea of this kind of medium state; of a sinner saved from death, and yet not entitled to life. The same atonement which saves him from condemnation places him without charge, in vicarious innocence, before the throne of God. Adam enjoyed his life of happiness from the first; although at the first he was simply innocent, having wrought out no righteousness of active obedience. And this Apostle, we formerly saw, does not proceed on any such nice distinctions; but considers the forgiveness, or non-imputation, or covering of sin as the same in effect with the imputation of righteousness.*

The truth is, the work of Christ is just the whole of His humiliation, with all that He did and all that He suffered in the nature which He humbled Himself to assume.† That on account of which God exalted and glorified Christ, is that on account of which He justifies and glorifies sinners. Let all consider this. You have been constituted sinners by the transgression of the first Adam. You have added to the guilt of the original apostasy a great amount of personal sin,

* Rom. iv. 8, 10

† Phil. ii, 6, 11.

sin of omission and commission, of heart and life. There is but one way in which you can be justified, or constituted righteous, that is, on the ground of the vicarious obedience unto death of the Son of God. If you believe not in Him, you die without a justifying righteousness, and must perish. O refuse not the kindly offered boon.*

* 2 Cor. v. 18, 21.

LECTURE XXVI.



ROMANS v. 12—21.

(FIFTH DISCOURSE.)

HAVING illustrated the grand point of parallelism, let us now see what are the points of *contrast*, verses 15—17:—“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead: much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”

There is one more general, and there are three more particular points of contrast here.

The *general* point is, that whereas the condemnation and death which came by the first Adam were the due “wages of sin;” the righteousness and life which came by the second are the bestowment of pure grace, of entirely unmerited favour. This, indeed, runs through the whole passage, and it forms the characteristic distinction between the Law and the Gospel. The sentence of death pronounced on Adam, and in him on his posterity, is the sentence of justice incurred by transgression, deserved by guilt. The Supreme Ruler, therefore, by whom it had been pronounced, was under no obligation of

righteousness to deliver from it. He was rather under the obligation of truth and justice to see it executed. A condemned malefactor, if pardoned, must be pardoned by grace; if his condemnation be in justice, the remission of his sentence must be in clemency. Where death is due, life must be a gift. Where a curse is merited, the blessing must flow from purely spontaneous favour. This is a view which the Apostle never suffers us to forget, that all that sinners suffer is suffered by them on their own account, and that all that is enjoyed by them, in possession or in hope, they enjoy on account of another. The whole passage is intended to illustrate and magnify the riches of God's grace in the salvation of sinners; contrasting their just deserts with the free and abundant goodness of God towards them.

This is the object of the *three more particular points of contrast.*

1. The first appears to me to relate to the superior dignity of the second Adam in whom sinners have life, above the first in whom they died. "*The offence*" is properly Adam's first sin, but from its being opposed to "*the free gift*," it must evidently be understood inclusively of its deadly effects, ver. 15. The "*free gift*" is the benefit conferred by divine favour through Jesus Christ. It is the same as "*the gift by grace*" in the latter part of the verse, and is variously expressed, more fully or more partially, in those which follow. It is "*justification*," the "*gift of righteousness*," "*reigning in life*" and "*justification of life*," and "*life eternal*." Some of these express a part, and others the whole, of what is meant by "*the free gift*." It includes them all. It seems, at first view, as if the Apostle did no more than simply state his general proposition respecting the superabundance of grace; and that in the following verses he goes on to illustrate it, showing wherein the superabundance lies. I am inclined, however, to think that there is more here implied than, on cursory reading, might seem to be expressed. I think he here assigns *the cause* of the superabounding of grace; and that he designs to impress in that very cause the idea of its superabun-

dance. The cause is represented as lying in the infinitely superior dignity of the second Adam to that of the first. The words, "which is by one man, Jesus Christ," do not, in the original, relate to "gift" as their antecedent, but to "grace."* The "gift of God" is not only "by grace," but it is by the "grace which is by one man, Christ Jesus." And herein consists the grand reason of its abounding, exceeding, overflowing, beyond the ruin introduced by the first man's sin. The justice sentencing to death was by the one man Adam; the grace bestowing life is by the one man Jesus Christ; and in proportion to the infinite superiority of the one to the other might we expect the grace to abound beyond the effects of the sentence of justice. "If by the offence of one many died;"† if the one offence of one man, a creature lower than the angels, was in the sight of God so full of malignity and guilt; if such was the amount of its evil desert, that it brought a sentence of death not only on himself but on the whole race that was to spring from him, in all its successive generations, (and what an impressive and awakening view does this give us of the "exceeding sinfulness" of sin!) "much more" the grace of God which is "by the one man Jesus Christ," Immanuel, God manifested in the flesh, a man in union with Deity, and the gift which is by this grace "hath abounded unto many" beyond the ruin produced by the first sin. If the sin of the first Adam was so exceeding sinful, how infinitely more meritorious the sinless obedience of the second! If the first man's transgression was so dis honouring to God, how unspeakably glorifying to His name the atoning work of the second man, "the Lord from heaven." It is by Him that grace confers on sinners its "free gifts." Surely the grace that comes in such a channel must come abundantly. And besides, the very appointment of one of such exalted dignity to bear the relation to men of the second Adam, through whom the gifts of grace should be conferred, is itself the most marvellous display conceivable of super-abounding grace. That the Son of God Himself should

* ἡ δωρεὴ ἡνὶ ἀχειρῶ τῷ τοῦ ἴνδος, κ. τ. λ.

† ἀνιδίδωσιν.

have put honour upon the human nature by taking it into union with the divine, for the purpose of repairing the ruin brought upon the race of man by its first head, even by “him who is of the earth, earthly;” this is grace indeed, grace without a parallel even in all God’s own doings.*

2. The second of the three points of superiority in the constitution of things under the second Adam to that under the first represents the abounding of pardoning grace, beyond the guilt of Adam’s sin, to the forgiveness of “*many offences*,” that is, of all actual sins committed by each sinner in his own person:—“Not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift;” that is, the gift is not of merely equal extent with the condemnation which came by the “one that sinned,” namely, Adam; “for the judgment or sentence was by one,” that is, by one offence (as the clause which brings out the contrast shows) “unto condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.” What is the measure of the second death that is to be considered as immediately resulting from the first sin to Adam’s posterity, it is not for us at all to determine. This we know, that the personal sins of men tend to aggravate beyond conception the weight of the original sentence of death; they deepen the gloom of hell, and indeed will, without question, form the chief ground of every one’s condemnation.

Then comes in the abundance of grace. The sins of every individual are much more numerous and aggravated than the mind, through the inattention and thoughtlessness and insensibility of the heart and conscience, is ready to conceive. Some have sinned longer than others; some have gone to greater excesses of outward wickedness than others, and have filled up their time more diligently with the awful activity of sin. But of every man, while he continues in a state of alienation of heart from God, it may with truth, in a very important sense, be affirmed, that his whole life is sin. While in this condition, every day, every hour, every moment must of necessity be a continual accumulation of guilt,

* 1 John iv. 9, 10; Rom. v. 6, 8.

an adding of weight to the curse; and even after sinners are brought under the influence of converting and sanctifying grace, still they have abundant cause to say:—"In many things we all offend." If every sin deserves God's wrath and curse—O what a load of wrath must rest upon sinners who have for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, seventy, or fourscore years, been "going on in their trespasses!" Who can calculate the amount thus accumulated? But, blessed be God, "the free gift is of *many* offences unto justification." Many, indeed. Wherever a sinner is justified, there must be the remission of all his sins; for one unpardoned sin would separate him for ever from God. Such is the superabundance of grace; such its overflowing riches, that it not only remits freely the guilt arising from the "one offence" of Adam, but extends to the free and full forgiveness to many of the "many offences" of each. What a glorious truth for us individually! And when we recollect that those who experience this remission of all their trespasses shall constitute a "multitude which no man can number;" amongst whom every sin of every individual merited the wrath of God, what a delightful view does this give us of the "exceeding riches of God's grace!"* Thus extensive are the declarations and promises of God's word. It is a free, full, and everlasting pardon of all sin, of the whole accumulated mass of personal guilt, that is offered in the grace of God to every child of Adam without difference, by the grace of the Gospel.†

3. The third particular is, the superior glory and blessedness of the life that is obtained by the grace of God in Christ to that which was lost by Adam's sin.‡ By Adam's sin, the earthly paradise was forfeited. But the obedience of the second Adam, Christ Jesus, has been effectual to raise to a life of still higher dignity and enjoyment than even the Eden of original purity and bliss.

To "*reign in life*" means to enjoy a life at once of consummate blessedness and of exalted dignity. The life of the

* Eph. ii. 7. † Jer. xxxi. 34; Isa. xliii. 22, 25; Mic. vii. 18, 19.

‡ Ver. 17.

heavenly paradise shall certainly be superior to that of the earthly:—"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* In the earthly Eden the first man was put, "to dress it and to keep it."† In the heavenly, redeemed men shall be "equal unto the angels;"‡ and the Apostle seems to intimate that, under Christ as a common Head, angels and redeemed men shall be united for ever in one glorious and holy and happy community.§ There will be enjoyed more enlarged knowledge of God than even that which Adam possessed; a fuller display having been given of all the divine perfections by the very work of redemption to which their heavenly glory shall be for ever ascribed; a display that has enlarged and elevated even the knowledge of angels.|| From the enlargement of their acquaintance with God, the joy both personal and social of redeemed sinners shall be indefinitely enhanced. And although their moral purity shall be perfect in freedom from every, the slightest, taint of corruption, yet the increase of the knowledge of the divine character cannot fail to impart, as it advances, a higher tone to all its holy principles and affections. Holy love, the fountain of celestial joy, must necessarily grow in intensity and in happy influence with the growing knowledge of Him who is its primary and infinite object. And while intellectual and spiritual enjoyment shall thus be larger and more exalted, the Scriptures tell us also of a superiority in the life of the body itself. This Apostle contrasts the body which believers shall receive at the resurrection with the mortal and corruptible body which they occupied as fallen children of the first sinner.¶ It is true the corruption, dishonour, and weakness of the present body are the effects of sin; yet, although the first Adam had not fallen, his body would have continued (I mean as far as our information from the divine Record goes) "an animal body," a frame, that is, requiring the support of food, air, sleep, and the other means of sustenance to ani-

* John x. 10.

† Gen. ii. 15.

‡ Mat. xxii. 30.

§ Eph. i. 10; Col. i. 20.

|| 1 Pet. i. 12; Eph. iii. 10.

¶ 1 Cor. xv. 44, 49.

mal life. Such would have been the bodies his posterity would have derived from him. But the resurrection body is a “spiritual body;” an epithet, it is true, of whose precise import we are unable to form anything like a correct conception: but which conveys the idea of independence of the ordinary means of sustentation necessary in this life, and of a frame refined and purified from all its earthly grossnesses; etherealized, and freed from every tendency to corruption; full of vital and active energy, without liability to weariness or decay.*

It is by no means easy for us to trace the different views in which the heavenly life shall excel the original earthly life; because it is difficult for sinful creatures to form any adequate conception of either the one or the other. But if we are to measure the superiority not merely by the difference between earth and heaven, the place of the abode of God in our nature, and of the full manifestation of the divine glory in Christ; but by the difference between the first and second, the earthly and the heavenly Adam, the human and the divine, the superiority must be vast indeed. It ought also to be noticed, as constituting one important part of the superiority, that there will be no uncertainty of its continuance, no prescribed conditions dependent on the will of a fallible and peccable creature. The security of its everlasting permanence will be a most material addition to the bliss of the paradise above. There will be no danger of forfeiture. No subtle and malignant tempter shall find admission there; no secret surmise of the remotest possibility of change shall ever enter the mind, to unsettle and disturb its peace. “The Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended.”†

Those who shall thus “reign in life by Jesus Christ,” are here described by the first principle of their new spiritual character; they are such as “receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness.” In this instance, I think, the word rendered “receive” signifies, not merely getting,

* Phil. iii. 21.

† Rev. vii. 14, 17.

obtaining, or having bestowed upon them; but accepting or embracing.* The word *has* this sense.† This, then, marks who they are of whom the Apostle speaks. Such as reject this abundant grace and the gift of righteousness can have no part in this reign of life.‡

These seem to be the points in which the Apostle compares Adam and Christ in the way of contrast, showing that in all things the second Adam has the pre-eminence. He had spoken of the Law, with reference to the false notions entertained by the Jews concerning it, and the foolish and high-minded expectations which they founded upon it. In the closing verses of the chapter, he points out the end which the Law really answered; and still with the view of magnifying by contrast with it, the riches of God's grace.§

So far from removing guilt, the effect of the Law was precisely the reverse; and therefore, while they trusted in their possession of it, they were deceiving themselves. “*The law entered that the offence might abound.*” It is very true, that trespasses were multiplied by the ceremonial law; many things being, by the command of God enjoining their observance, rendered in their omission criminal; and many others, which would otherwise have been indifferent, rendered criminal in their performance, by the injunction to abstain. But the sentiment chiefly intended seems rather to be that the moral law, revealing the will of God in its full extent, and in all its spirituality of requirement, served to make manifest the amount of offence against it. It showed the extent of the sinfulness of men, both in the inconceivable number, and in the fearful heinousness of transgressions.|| The word translated “*entered,*” ¶ signifies its being introduced by the way, or in the course of the divine procedure, to subserve the great general design of God in His scheme of redemption by answering a special purpose of its own.** “*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*”

* λαμβάνοντες.

† John i. 11, 12; v. 43; 1 John v. 9.

‡ John iii. 36.

§ Verses 20, 21. || Rom. vii. 7—13.

¶ Παρεισῆλθεν, “came in besides,” Alford. Compare Olshausen.—ED.

** Gal. iii. 19

Grace superabounded, that is, it abounded beyond the guilt. Even when viewed in the light of the Law in its full amount of intrinsic demerit and of circumstantial aggravation; still the grace which the Gospel reveals abounds beyond it, is more than sufficient to cover and cancel it all. Here is the glory of this grace. It gives the conscience satisfactory peace in the face of the Law in all its convicting and alarming purity of requirement and severity of denunciation. Take it as it is, and take the amount of sin as it is, without one jot of abatement; still divine grace reaches beyond all our calculations of guilt and estimates of demerit. Let transgressions be ever so great and ever so numerous, they are all, like the huge rocks and the uncounted sands in the bed of the mighty deep, overflowed and covered by the boundless ocean of divine mercy. Let our convictions of sin, therefore, be ever so strong, our apprehensions from the Law ever so alarming, there is no room, while the message of Gospel grace is in our ears, for despondency or despair. These feelings are dishonouring to the unlimited and untrammelled fulness and freedom of God's mercy in Christ. It is the delight and it is the glory of this mercy, freely, and at once and for ever, to cancel the very largest amount of guilt. The Law, while it manifested the extent and the guilt of transgression, provided in itself no means of deliverance; but it pointed by all its types and figures to "the grace that was afterwards to be revealed." That discovery has now been fully and clearly made.*

In winding up this subject, it is evident the Apostle speaks of sin in all its extent of commission, and all its aggravation of guilt; and of death in all its extent, as coming not on account of the first sin of the first man merely, but on account of all actual personal guilt; "the second death" in its full amount of woe.† "Of the things which he had spoken," we may say in his own language elsewhere, "this is the sum."‡ And a glorious and blessed summing up it is! Sin and grace are here held up to our contemplation as

* John i. 17.

† Verse 21.

‡ Heb. viii. 1.

two monarchs, and the genius of their respective reigns is characteristically marked. The reign of sin is dark and deadly. It is not properly, indeed, the reign of a tyrant, capricious, arbitrary, unjust. He has his power from God. He keeps his subjects in bondage, under a universal sentence of death. But the bondage and the sentence are righteous. He inflicts the sentence with unrelenting rigour on all his subjects, but not in tyrannical cruelty that delights in punishing the innocent, and makes no distinction between the harmless and the criminal. His reign is a reign of justice, but of justice without mercy. It is all dismal and gloomy, unbrightened, unrelieved by a single ray of the light of love. "*Sin reigns unto death.*" Opposed to this is the "*reign of grace.*" As the other was a deadly, this is a life-giving reign; it is unto life, eternal life. She sways a sceptre of peace. Her face is clothed with the smiles of love; and her eye beams gentleness and compassion. As her very name implies, grace confers on the sinner the blessings of life as a gift without desert and without price; confers them as the gratuitous bestowments of unmerited bounty on those who deserved "*the wages of sin,*" which is death. She dispenses those blessings with a sovereign right to confer them on whom she will, all being alike undeserving. If one had any claim for them more than another, on that individual they could not be bestowed by grace. The law, we have seen, makes no provision for mercy. The reign of sin, therefore, is to the sinner justice without mercy. On the other hand, the reign of grace, as it respects the deserts of her subjects, is pure, unmixed, unqualified mercy. As to each of them, personally considered, justice would necessarily say, "*Let him die the death.*" But we are not by any means to imagine that this reign, considered in itself, is the reign of mercy without justice. Far be such a thought. All God's ways are consistent with all God's perfections. When we speak of sin by personification as condemning to death, we mean that God condemns to death for sin; and in doing this, He acts in perfect consistency with His mercy as well as His justice. When we personify grace, and speak of grace bestowing life, we

mean that God in Christ confers it in free favour; and in doing this, He acts consistently with His justice as well as His mercy.

Hence it is here added, that “grace reigns *through righteousness* unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” The righteousness here spoken of cannot be our own righteousness, for we have none; and if we had, and life were in any measure on account of it, it could not be “of grace,” nor would there be any room for the question with which the next chapter opens:—“What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” The righteousness is clearly the same with that spoken of in the preceding verses.* It is the righteousness of the second Adam. And when grace confers life on the ground of it, all is in perfect harmony with the righteousness of the divine character, and law, and government. “Mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.”† That it is the righteousness of Christ that is meant, is clear from what follows:—“*Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” He “fulfilled all righteousness;” and by so doing made way for the reign of grace, as a reign in perfect concord with the claims of the most strict and unimpeachable justice. His obedience “magnified the Law.” His death vindicated its sanction and exhausted its penalty. So that when eternal life is bestowed on account of it, it is conferred in full harmony with the requirements of the Law, while yet it is a gift of grace to the sinner who receives it. Thus it is that divine forgiveness holds forth the most wonderful manifestation at once of divine mercy and of divine righteousness.

Let the children of God, in contemplating original and actual sinfulness and guilt, cherish the sentiment of contrite humility. Surely in the presence of a just and holy God, there is great occasion for all the depth of sorrowing self-abasement. But let them not look at the dark side only, so as that contrition and lowliness should degenerate into despondency and doubt. There is abundant cause for constant

* Verses 18, 19.

† Ps. lxxxv. 10.

peace and joy in the infinite fulness and unrestrained freeness of Gospel mercy. We dishonour God when we doubt His testimony, or hesitate and fear to rely on the faithfulness of His promises. It is especially cheering to think that mercy flows through the perfect righteousness of Immanuel, in a way which combines in lovely and indissoluble union the honour of His holy justice with that of His everlasting love. How satisfying this union to the mind; nothing else can give it steady repose. Admiring, then, the wisdom which has placed in harmonious union things so apparently opposite and irreconcileable, let us, in faith and love and joy, sing:—“Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”*

Unbelieving sinners, lay to heart your original and actual guilt. However you may cavil at the former, you cannot deny the latter; and the latter is more than sufficient for your condemnation. And under a sentence of condemnation you all lie,—a sentence from God, a righteous sentence, a sentence from which you cannot vindicate yourselves, and from the execution of which you cannot escape. Think of the holiness of God, and of the consequent purity and spirituality of His law. Think of the calm inflexibility of the principle of justice in His character and government. Think what a load of divine displeasure must lie upon you for all your sins. You have nothing to do with God’s secret purposes. The way of escape is set before you. Ample and immediate encouragement is held out to you to come to God for pardon and full salvation, through the overflowing abundance of His grace in Christ Jesus. The righteousness of Christ is infinitely more than a counterbalance to Adam’s sin and to your own. Grace reigns through this righteousness. It abounds beyond the largest possible amount of guilt. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”† The righteousness which is to justify you is here. It belongs not to you to work it out. What could

* Rev. vii. 10.

† Isa i. 18.

you do were that required? It is here, revealed in the testimony of the Gospel as finished by another, by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the Divine Mediator. There is nothing remaining for you to do. It is yours simply to "receive the abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness," and thus you shall "reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." This life is a life of happiness, because it is a life of holiness. And this is the life begun below, in the full enjoyment of which, in its perfection of purity and bliss, hereafter you shall reign with Christ above.*

* This Lecture and the three preceding are, with very slight alteration reprinted from the author's "Systematic Theology."—ED.

LECTURE XXVII.

ROMANS VI. 1—4.

“ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

In the preceding part of this Epistle, the Apostle had stated with the greatest precision, illustrated with the greatest clearness, and established with the greatest force of argument, the grand doctrine of salvation by free grace. It is impossible to conceive terms more explicit than those which he employs; and nothing manifests more strikingly the aversion of the human heart to that doctrine than the perverse ingenuity with which his language has been explained away.—From the 18th verse of the first chapter, the Apostle makes his appeal to *facts*, for the actual ungodliness and practical depravity of Gentiles and of Jews. At the 9th verse of chapter third, he proceeds to show to the Jews, that the doctrine of universal corruption was not new; that testimony had been borne to it in those Scriptures which they professed to venerate as the inspired word of God.* He draws thence the immediate and obvious inference of universal guilt and condemnation, and the impossibility of being justified by a violated law.† And on this he finds the equally obvious conclusion of the necessity of a

* Chap. iii. 9—11.

† Verses 19, 20.

free or gratuitous justification through the merits of a Mediator.* He proceeds in the fourth chapter to present proofs and illustrations of the same fundamental truth, from sources peculiarly fitted for the conviction of Jews—especially from the case of Abraham himself;—whom their own Scriptures recorded to have been “justified by his faith,” long before the giving of the Law, and even before his circumcision—than which nothing could more effectually strike at the root of the dependence of his children upon their circumcision and their observance of the Mosaic institutions, or on anything else but the faith that had justified their great progenitor.

In the close of the fifth chapter, he traces the corruption of mankind to its original source; and draws a comparison, in points both of parallelism and of contrast, between condemnation through the sin of Adam, and justification through the obedience of Christ;—and he closes the chapter in terms fitted to show the folly of trusting in the Law,—the entrance of which only served to manifest the abundance of iniquity, to confirm and aggravate the original condemnation, and to prove the indispensable necessity of *grace*, and of grace abounding.

I can hardly allow it to be said that we *interpret* the Apostle’s language as meaning that salvation is by grace. It does not need interpretation. *Interpretation* always supposes the putting of a thing that is not quite clear into plainer terms. But we deny that this is possible; that any terms whatever can be more explicit than those employed by him.

But were any further evidence needed of our being right in our understanding of the Apostle’s statements beyond the explicitness of the statements themselves—we have it here. Supposing these statements had been less clear than they are, we might have ascertained their meaning by the nature of the *objections* which the writer anticipates as likely to be made against them. It is quite obvious, that if any room had been left for the righteousness of the sinner in the ground of acceptance with God, the objection supposed to be

* Verses 21—24.

offered in our text would never have occurred to any mind whatever. If the Apostle's doctrine had been that of justification by human merit, who would ever have thought of objecting to that doctrine that it might tempt men to "continue in sin that grace might abound?" To some it may appear that this is all in favour of the doctrine of justification by works, that it leaves no room for any such objection. But this is not the point before us. The point to be ascertained is not what doctrine any man may conceive to be best, but simply *what is the doctrine of the Apostle?* And we affirm, that it cannot be a doctrine to which, in the nature of things it is inconceivable that such an objection could ever be offered; and that as the doctrine of justification by grace is the only doctrine that furnishes the objection with even the slightest shadow of plausibility, or leaves it a single hair's-breadth of imaginary ground on which to rest, or so much as allows of the possibility of its entering into any mind,—this must be the doctrine of the Apostle.

We may add to this observation, that as human nature is still the same, and similar causes give rise to similar effects, we *now*, in our own day, discover the doctrine which, amidst the variety of conflicting systems, corresponds with that of Paul, by the sameness of the objections offered to it, and the dangers sincerely or in pretence apprehended from it. Judging by this criterion (and it is a perfectly fair one) we can be at no loss. If, on these subjects, you know anything at all, you know the doctrine that is stigmatized with the tendency of loosening the bonds of moral obligation, of encouraging licentiousness, and leading men to say "*Let us continue in sin that grace may abound.*" You have *heard* this objection made to the doctrine of salvation by grace; *you* have perhaps entertained and sported it yourselves. But if you consider the objection to have any force in it, you ought, in consistency, to give up the inspiration of Paul,—to give up your faith in the Bible:—for the objection is one which Paul anticipated against *his* doctrine, and to which the doctrine of salvation by grace, which we believe he taught, could alone have given rise.

That this doctrine has been abused in the manner which the text supposes, is an undeniable and melancholy truth. But that this is its *design*, or that this is its *native tendency*, is quite a different proposition—and we are satisfied, that nothing but the most deplorable ignorance or the most malicious perverseness can ever affix to it the slanderous imputation.

No axiom can be more self-evident than the proposition, that the doctrine of a holy God must have a holy tendency. Darkness cannot emanate from light. Pollution cannot flow from a spring of purity. A principle that generates evil cannot have its origin in the blessed source of all good. If, either on principles theoretically sound, or by a fair induction of facts, the Gospel of salvation by free mercy could be shown to have an unholy tendency, the proof would be fatal to its divine authority. We admit this; and we boldly court attention to the nature, and native tendency, and genuine effects of the Gospel. Every one who really understands it and has experienced its power, will join with the Apostle in indignantly rejecting the conclusion, “Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound;” and, feeling the grievous inconsistency, exclaim with him, “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

The Apostle here takes up the point in one particular light; and to the illustration of that I shall at present confine myself.

As the argument depends in part on the meaning of the terms in the question, I must beg your attention to these:—

The phrase “*dead to sin*,” is commonly understood as meaning dead to the love, desire, and enjoyment of sin; as “the natural man” is dead to spiritual principles, and to the love, desire, and enjoyment of God and holiness. There are, however, insuperable objections to this sense:—

1. The same phrase is applied to *Christ* in verse tenth, But of him it is not true that in this sense he ever “died to sin,”—seeing he never was alive to it. Yet it seems reasonable to understand the expression in the same way in both places.

2. Understanding it thus—as descriptive of *character*,—will not suit the Apostle's argument. It is of the influence of *doctrine* he is speaking and reasoning; but, if we take the phrase as signifying dead to sinful enjoyment, it can be no answer to the objection contained in the preceding question. It would have been necessary to show that this “deadness to sin” was *produced* by the doctrine of grace which it is his object to vindicate from the imputation of sinful tendency. To answer an objection brought against a particular *doctrine* by stating the inconsistency of certain conduct with a certain *character* would, it is obvious, have been a very illegitimate mode of arguing.

The phrase “dead to sin” might be rendered “dead *by* sin:”* for it is precisely of the same construction in the original with that in chap. v. 15, 17.† Taken in this sense, it suggests the *general idea*, and *key* of interpretation for the whole passage, which seems to be, that Christ having sustained the character of *a surety*, all who believe in him are considered as having an interest in all that was done and suffered in their room, as if it had been done and suffered by themselves. Jesus Christ “died *by* sin.” Sin was the cause of all his sufferings; it brought him to death. This amounts to the same thing with his dying *on account* of sin. All his people, all who believe in him, are considered as having part with him in his death—as dying *with* him, and *in* him. This is evidently the spirit of the explanation which the Apostle immediately subjoins—verses 3, 4. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” To be “buried *with him*” means to be partakers with him in his death; and this participation they had by believing in him as the Surety of sinners dying in their room,—of which faith their baptism had been the profession.

* ἀπειθάνειν τῇ ἀμαρτίᾳ.

† τῷ παραπτώματι ἀπίθανον.

“We, whosoever have been baptized into Jesus Christ, have been baptized into his death.” To be “baptized into Jesus Christ,” is to be baptized into the faith of his divine person, mission, character, and work. To be “baptized into his death” is to be baptized into the faith of his death, in the view which the Gospel gives of it as the atonement for sin made by Him who sustained the capacity of the substitute of sinners—“bearing their sins.” The simple and obvious meaning of being “buried with him by baptism into death,” or into *his* death,* seems to be that by being baptized into the faith of his death as the death of an atoning surety or substitute, we become *partakers with him in it*. Why, it may be asked, “buried with him?” Why not simply *dead* with him? It might with the same propriety be asked, Why is the *burial* of Christ ever mentioned at all? It was no part of his death: yet it comes in for notice amongst Gospel facts.† Two reasons may be given for its being mentioned in the passage before us:—1. The burial of Christ was one of the evidences of the reality of his death: and *one* idea intended to be conveyed may therefore be, that believers are as really and certainly partakers with him in his death, as if they had been not only dead but buried with him—as certainly as the burial of Jesus certified his death.—2. It was needful to *complete the figure* he was employing, namely, the comparison which he makes between the resurrection of Christ, and the rising of his people from the death of sin to “newness of life.” As it was necessary in the reality, that Christ should be *buried* in order to his rising from the grave; so it was necessary, *in the figure*, that believers should be considered as buried with him, in order to their rising with him.

This idea of union with Christ in his death, seems to be expressed in other places;‡—and it is applied also to his *resurrection and glory*.§

What then is the force of the Apostle’s argument—what

* εἰς τὸν θάνατον.
† Gal. ii. 19, 20.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.
§ Eph. ii, 4—6.

is the basis on which he rests his conclusion when he says—"How shall we who died* by sin," as believing partakers in the vicarious death of our Surety, "live any longer therein?"—In answer to this, let the following remarks be considered:—

1. This view of the death of Christ as the death of a Surety, and of our dying in him on account of sin, implies a deep conviction and feeling in the mind of every one who sincerely holds it—(and in the present argument we are entitled to assume that it is *sincerely* held—we *must* indeed assume this, else we cannot ascertain its tendency at all; for the tendency of no doctrine can be estimated from the character of those who hypocritically *profess* to hold it, that is, who in reality do not hold it)—it implies then *a deep conviction in the mind of every one who sincerely holds it, of the awful demerit and desert of sin.* All who hold this belief have before them in the death of Christ a most impressive view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. They declare their conviction that sin, as committed by themselves, deserves that death; of which the fearfulness is indicated by the sufferings of the Surety connected with His ineffable dignity and glory. How manifest the inconsistency of this impression with "continuing in sin!" With the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary before our eyes—with Jesus the Mediator in our view drinking that cup for us, of which sin constituted all the inexpressible bitterness,—and with the conviction and impression on our minds that the desert of all this was *ours!*—how *can* we continue to live in sin?

2. In the death of Christ, God has, in a manner the most overwhelming, testified *His displeasure against sin.* Now, viewing Christ's death as that of a Surety, we consider this displeasure as directed against *our sins.* When Christ dies, we die *in him*, enduring the Divine wrath for sin in the person of our Surety.

Is it then possible, that any who hold this view of Christ's death should imagine, that God would thus ex-

* *ιερεθάνατος*, hist. aor.

press His displeasure against their sins, in order that they might have license to *indulge in sin*? The supposition involves a contradiction. The design of God must have been the very opposite of this: and since we view Christ's death as *ours*, then our *dying in him* must be in harmony with the design of his death. This design is accordingly very strongly expressed in verses fourth and sixth.

3. If the death of Christ gave us a view of God as a God *all mercy*, without the principles of holiness and justice leading Him to hate and to punish sin, we might perceive the force of this objection—the danger of “continuing in sin that grace may abound.” But in the view of the death of Christ as that of a Surety, we recognize the *holy punitive justice* of God in all its sacred and inviolable purity. We behold the sanction of the Law carried into awful effect; its sentence executed, in all its tremendous import, in the person of the Surety. We rejoice in admitting that grace abounds; but we see justice abounding too;—holy hatred of sin combining with mercy to the sinner. “Grace reigns;” but it is “through righteousness.” Mercy extends her sceptre; but it is from a throne that is settled on the basis of eternal justice. Thus, while in the death of Christ we see all the encouragement which as sinners we can need from the grace of God; we at the same time feel what cause we have to tremble and to shrink from the commission of what God has in the Cross so emphatically declared he cannot pass by with impunity.

4. Our viewing the *death* of Christ as that of a Surety, implies, as I have said, our viewing his *life* as that of a Surety. We cannot be partakers in the former, without being partakers in the latter also. Now the life of Christ, to which he rose from the death which he endured for sin, is a life of perfect, holy, eternal separation from sin. In this life we hope to have full participation hereafter—“Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is,”*

* 1 John iii. 2.

“Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”*—But what is our participation in this life *now*—whilst we are *here*? It is intimated in verse fourth, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”†

There is expressed in these words, *first*, a parallel between Christ’s rising from the dead, and our rising to the new life of holiness: *second*, the purpose of God in the death of Christ, and in our becoming by faith partakers in his death:—and *third*, a connexion between the dying and rising of Christ, and our rising to “newness of life,” the one being the cause and the other the effect.

i. Christ’s death was a death under the curse—iniquity being by imputation laid upon him. He rose to a life of freedom from the curse, being in his resurrection acquitted from his imputed guilt, and ascended to perfect glory and blessedness. The death in which *we* are by nature is the death under the curse, differing from Christ’s death in this, that He, although voluntarily taking the charge of guilt upon him, was personally sinless. From this death we rise by faith to “*newness of life*”—a life of freedom from the curse—a life of blessedness in the favour of God—a life of glory and joy in bearing the image of Christ. As the heavenly life of Christ is superior to his earthly, so is the life to which believers are raised with him superior to their former life when dead in sin. It is a life of new principles, new affections, new desires, manifested in a new course of conduct—“they *walk* in newness of life.” And their new life is an eternal life. O to what an exalted pattern they are conformed! The life to which they are raised is a life resembling that of Jesus at the right hand of God. Who, then, that professes to be a disciple of Jesus can persist in sin? No conceivable motive can possibly render this consistent.

* Col. iii. 3, 4.

† Compare 1 John iii. 3.

ii. Christ was commissioned by the Father, upheld by Him in his work, and then raised from the dead by His glorious power. Why did God do all this? Was it that sinners might be delivered from *guilt*, in order to their sinning without restraint or fear, that so room might be given for the display of grace in their forgiveness? "God forbid!" The divine grace is not such *unholy favour*. God's design was to "form a people for himself," who should be "to the praise of the glory of his grace"—to the glory of His grace in their deliverance from guilt, and the glory of His grace and holiness in their deliverance from sin itself and their bearing His blessed image.* Thus we become partakers of the death of Christ *in order to* our living *with* him and living *like* him. The man, then, who from any idea of giving scope to abounding grace continues to live in sin, *opposes the very purpose of God in the death of His Son, and in bringing sinners to believe in his Name.*

iii. There is a connexion of *cause and effect* between our dying for sin in the person of our substitute, and our walking in "newness of life." There is a manifestation given in the death and resurrection of Jesus of the love of God—the Father and the Son. When, by divine illumination, we are led to view the mediatorial substitution of the Son of God aright, we behold in it such an exhibition of infinite love to the worthless, as subdues the enmity of the heart, melts the soul to godly sorrow for sin, and subdues it to returning love to the God of love, and softens the conscience from unfeeling callousness to tender sensibility. This love to God produces an admiring desire to be like him. His holiness becomes lovely. We learn to hate what God hates; to seek God's glory; to show our love to God by imitation and obedience; to fulfil God's design in Christ's death by "walking in newness of life." He, therefore, who "continues in sin" shows that he has never taken a right view of the death of Christ, and has never felt it in his heart as the overpowering manifestation of divine love, "slaying the enmity of the heart," and recon-

* Titus ii. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 21, 24.

ciling him to God—and that he has no part in the virtue of the Saviour's blood.—This leads me to notice—

5. The principle of *gratitude* dictates the “God forbid!” with which the Apostle rejects the imputation of “continuing in sin that grace may abound.” In the death of Christ there appears at once God's hatred of sin, and God's love to sinners. As *His* love to *us* is connected with hatred of sin; so must be *our* love to *Him*. Whatever teaches us to love God, *must* teach us to hate sin. We cannot love God and practise what God hates. We cannot be grateful for God's love to us as displayed in the death of our Surety, whom that love appointed, and continue living in that of which His abhorrence was testified in the same event. The believing view of the cross that engenders love to God, subdues in the same instant the love of sin. The two cannot possibly subsist as indulged affections in the same bosom. Dying in the person of our Surety implies our Surety dying for us:—and oh! how can we endure to live any longer in sin when we think of what it cost Him “who loved us and gave himself for us!” “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” And can we think of this grace and resist the appeal—“If ye love me, keep my commandments?” When we think of his love, should not the pleasures of sin be turned into the “gall of asps within us?” Can we grieve by sin the Friend of sinners? Can we “crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame?” “How shall we, that are dead by sin, live any longer therein?”

The expression, “How shall we live *any longer* therein?” intimates, that it is this view of the death of Christ, as the death of an atoning Surety, that *first* produces the decided and principled renunciation of sin. This effect is accomplished, not by the Law, but by the Gospel. By the requirements and denunciations of the Law, a sinner may be convicted of guilt. His conscience may be roused, and his fears alarmed; and he may form many resolutions against future transgression. But *hated of sin* the Law can never produce;

and so long as sin continues to be loved, it is impossible that it should be forsaken. The power of corruption will burst asunder the bonds of all such resolutions, as Samson burst the green withs, and snapped the new cords wherewith they bound him to take away his strength. It is the sight of the Cross; it is the believing view of Jesus dying there as the all-merciful Surety of sinners, “putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself;” “bearing their iniquities in his own body on the tree,” so that those for whom he dies die in him and are delivered from the curse;—it is *this* that sets sin before the mind in its true colours. It is this that prevails on the sinner, subdued by Divine love, smitten with remorse and melted to penitence for having sinned against so much kindness, won over by the view of unmerited and abounding mercy, to “confess and to forsake,” to adopt the language, “How shall we who have died by sin live any longer therein!”

There are few things, perhaps none, that contain a more affecting display of the depravity and perverseness of our nature than the abuse of the Gospel and the opposition and objections made to it. The “turning of the grace of God into licentiousness” seems the very highest pitch of human impiety, involving the exercise of the basest principles and affections of the heart. It is impiously opposing the design of the holy God to destroy sin; and converting the very method He has adopted for its destruction into an encouragement to its indulgence. It is to pervert, with ingratitude for which there is not a name, the best gifts of God to his dishonour: it is taking advantage of divine goodness to brave and insult divine justice. God has distinguished men above fallen angels by the revelation of His grace and the gift of His Son for their salvation:—and this is the return—the manifestation of ingratitude, such as devils have never had opportunity to display!—The objections made to the Gospel of grace show at once the woful ignorance and the deep depravity of men. Man in innocence acted in humble and happy obedience, from love to God. *Fuller* man has no idea of obedience but on the proud and self-honouring terms of merit and reward. They are not at all disposed to say—

“ We are unprofitable servants,” but set down their doings as purchase-money for favour and for heaven.—The idea that any system tends to encourage sin, must arise from regarding it as taking away the chief motives to holiness. When men, therefore, bring this charge against the grace of the Gospel, they make it evident that they have no notion of serving God but on the stipulated conditions of self-glorying and mercenary payment; no idea of that free, cheerful, delightful filial obedience, which springs from gratitude and love for redeeming mercy—for rich abounding grace. The true-born child of God is animated by these principles, and “ runs in the way of God’s commandments.” O seek, my brethren, that you may be enabled practically to refute all objections of the kind we have been considering; giving them the lie by your conduct, showing them to be foul and false aspersions,—coming from men who show that they are not in earnest in their professed zeal for the interests of morality, by disregarding in their own lives all the claims of God and of godliness. No one but a holy man has any title to be considered as in earnest in the principle of such an objection; and a holy man never yet made it, and never can make it.

Sinners! beware of encouraging yourselves in sin under the expectation that grace may abound. What ignorance this! and what shocking usage of the blessed God! How would you relish having your forgiving disposition thus abused by a child of your own, or by any of your fellow-creatures! Now is the accepted time. Grace is now set before you. Grace alone suits your case. Accept it—humbly, thankfully, instantly accept it. It may be the last offer. God may give you up; or death may cut you down. Insulted mercy will then arm the hand of justice against you with tenfold terrors. Let the infinite grace of God in the Gospel engage your attention, and allure your wayward hearts! May it melt the cold unfeeling stone to penitence! and lead you, in humble and happy reliance on the Cross, to “ follow the Lord fully.”

LECTURE XXVIII

ROMANS VI. 5—11.

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

I ENDEAVOURED to fix, in last Lecture, the general principle of interpretation for the whole of the first part of this chapter. It seems to be, that, Jesus sustaining the character of a substitute, or representative, what was done and suffered by Him in this character is considered as if done and suffered by his people—by all, that is, who believe in his name. They are regarded as one with him, in his obedience, death, and resurrection. The union of believers with him in his death is what the Apostle expresses by their being “*buried with him*.”

I took no notice of the idea of our Baptist brethren, of a representation in the mode of baptism by immersion of the death and burial and resurrection of the Surety. According to them, the baptized person’s communion with Christ in his death and burial is represented by his being laid under *water*, and his communion with him in his resurrection by his being raised out of it. I cannot enter largely into this point; and indeed even touching upon it only draws

the mind from the scope and spirit of the Apostle's reasoning. I might say with truth that the resemblance itself is far-fetched and fanciful. It is obvious that there is none whatever to the *death* of Christ except as implied in his *burial*. And although the mind can readily habituate itself to the idea of likeness between a body being let down under *earth* and being raised out of it, and a body being let down under *water* and being raised out of it; yet it is not easy to trace the resemblance between the latter of these, and the carrying of a body by a lateral door into a cavern hewn out of the side of a rock, and that body reviving and coming forth by the same aperture. These, as you know, were the real circumstances of the case; and in these circumstances the supposed resemblance has always appeared to me forced and unnatural. I am persuaded, indeed, that by far the greater number of those in whose minds this idea has found place, have adopted it with a reference to our own ordinary mode of interment. It is quite obvious that the argument of the Apostle has no relation whatever to the *mode* of the ordinance. There is not the most distant occasion for the allusion, to make the passage clearly intelligible; nor does the allusion, when supposed, impart to it any addition of force or propriety. The meaning depends entirely, not on anything in the manner of performing the ceremony, but on its being baptism *into Christ's death*. Provided it was this, it makes not the smallest difference to his statement, or argument, or conclusion, whether we suppose the rite administered by immersion, or pouring, or sprinkling. Although it was, properly speaking, *in believing*, that converts became partakers with Christ in his death and resurrection; yet it is not unusual to represent things as taking place in baptism which really took place by faith, because baptism was the first public declaration of their faith, and of their belonging to the body of Christ. It is on the same principle that in baptism they are represented as "washing away their sins," and as "putting on Christ." The verse which forms the first in this day's exposition leads me further to remark, that *the whole passage is figurative*. The

same principle of interpretation, according to which the expression “buried with Christ” is explained as referring to the representation of interment by the immersion of the body under water should lead us also to understand the phrase “planted together in the likeness of his death” as referring to an emblematic representation of *planting*; (and this accordingly some have stretched their fancy to make out;) or the phrase “crucified with him” to some similar emblematic meaning of *crucifixion*.

Paul’s chief design in this fifth verse seems to be to introduce illustration and confirmation of the connexion between believers being one with Christ in his *death*, and their being one with him in his *resurrection*. This connexion he had stated in verse fourth, and he here adds—“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”

Being “*planted together** *in the likeness of his death*,” we understand as signifying the same union and fellowship with Christ in his death of which we have already spoken. Different views may be taken of the figure. As in vegetation, the plant that springs up is very different from the seed that falls into the ground and dies; so great is the difference between the life of the glorified Redeemer and his state when he “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death;” and such too is the corresponding difference between our natural corruption and the “newness of life” in which we walk when raised from death in sin, by faith in a dying and rising Redeemer.† Or there may be an allusion to our Lord’s own comparison of the vine and the branches—“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the

* σύρρευτοι. Rather, perhaps, “*grown together*, intimately and progressively united.” Comp. Alford in loc.—ED.

† Such is the figure as to the resurrection body, used in 1 Cor. xv 36—38, 42.

branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”* Thus in the passage under exposition, believers may be considered as *grafted* into him in a certain view of his official character, even as a dying and atoning substitute: and it is by being thus united with him in his death, that we grow up with him in the likeness of his resurrection or life. In this view, the figure is a striking one. According to the nature of the root or stock, will uniformly be the nature of the branches and fruit. It was from his death that Christ’s new life arose; and so, by our being one with him in his death, it is from this participation with him in his death, that *our* new life arises. And those who are ingrafted into him in his death, and derive their nourishment, vital, sanctifying nourishment, from this holy root, cannot prove corrupt branches, bearing the “fruits of Sodom.” “As the root is holy, so are the branches.” It is the Spirit of Christ, when he enlightens our minds in the knowledge of Him, and gives us to believe in his death, as the death of an atoning Surety, that thus plants us together in the likeness of his death, or grafts us into this holy root; and it is the same Spirit that causes us to grow up “in the likeness of his resurrection,” in the newness of spiritual life.

That the “*likeness of his resurrection*” is present spiritual life, to be perfected in the heavenly state, is manifest from what follows—verse 6. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”—From this it appears evident that when the *future tense* is used in verse fifth, it does not imply that the effect expressed is entirely to come, and that *now* we remain destitute of any conformity to Christ in his resurrection; but that this conformity is the result or consequence of conformity to him in his death, and also that it is progressive towards perfection and destined to attain to it. In the preceding chapter the Apostle had spoken of that inherent corruption of nature which is derived in our

* John xv. 1—4.

descent from a corrupt original. This corrupt nature is “*the old man*”*—the nature derived from the first Adam:—and opposed to it is “*the new man*,” the new nature, derived from our connexion with the second Adam. This “old man” we shall find often called “*the flesh*” or the *carnal mind*,” in opposition to “*the spirit*” or the *spiritual mind*.

This “old man” is here said to be “*crucified with Christ*.” Paul uses a similar expression in a very different sense when he says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”† This expresses his interest by faith in the death of Christ as that of a substitute; for he says, “nevertheless, *I live*.” The old man’s being “crucified with Him” is a very different thing;—for the design and effect of it are, “*that the body of sin might be destroyed*.” This evidently expresses figuratively the end of Christ’s death in regard to our deliverance from the power of sin, or of our corrupt nature.‡ To destroy the works of the devil is to destroy *sin* with its present and future effects; to destroy the power of “the old man,” our corrupt nature, by which it is that the devil “leads us captive at his will.” Our “old man is crucified with Christ,” because the cross of Christ is the old man’s death. Thus it is said—“And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”§ “The enmity” here spoken of is not the enmity between Jew and Gentile; which had been spoken of before, in connexion with their mutual reconciliation to each other; but that enmity which is removed when *both* are “reconciled unto God”—the enmity which constitutes the very essence of the old man’s nature. Our “old man” is thus “crucified with him,” because the death of Christ is, in design and efficacy, the death of sin, or of the power of the principles of corruption.

* To understand what is meant by “the old man,”—see Eph. iv. 20—24.

† Gal. ii. 20.

‡ Comp. 1 John iii. 8.

§ Eph. ii. 16.

This is confirmed by the expression—"that the body of sin might be destroyed."

"*The body of sin*" seems to me an expression of equivalent import with the "old man."* It cannot mean merely those lusts that are gratified by the body, or, as some have strangely expressed it, that have their seat in the body. The "body of sin," or "of the sins of the flesh," (which in this Epistle uniformly means corrupt nature,) is apparently designed to express the whole mass of human corruption—the entire complex yet uniform system of evil principles, desires, and passions, which constitute together our depraved nature. The word *body* not unfrequently signifies the whole person.† Here it may be so taken, as corresponding with the "old man;"—the "body of sin" meaning sin itself, as pervading and corrupting our whole person or constitution. The great end of Christ's death is "that this body of sin might be destroyed." I can see no good reason for understanding this word in any sense short of complete destruction. It is true, that the power of sin is not at present thus destroyed in us;—but its perfect destruction is the *design* to be answered by the death of Christ; and this *includes* the design immediately subjoined—"that henceforth we should not serve sin."

There are two respects in which *sin* may be said to *reign*—corresponding to two respects in which we are through Christ delivered from it. There is, first, its reign in the certain inevitable nature of the doom to which it sentences all its subjects.‡ And there is, further, its reign in regard to prevalent power and influence in our hearts, appearing in the subjection of our lives.§ Deliverance from sin's reign in the former of these views is *justification*:—deliverance from it in the latter, is *sanctification*. These deliverances, though in their nature distinct, are yet *one*, both in their *time* and in their means. Union by faith with Christ in his death is the origin of both. Believing in the atoning death of Christ,

* Comp. the expression in Col. ii. 11.

† Rom. xii. 1: 1 Pet. ii. 24. ‡ Chap. v. 21. § Chap. vi. 12.

we are justified; and, believing in it, we are sanctified, or set apart as holy unto God. There is, indeed, an inseparable union between these two. The Apostle speaks of *both* in the following verses, and speaks of them as they are naturally and indissolubly connected:—

Verse 7. “For he that is dead is freed from sin.” The word here translated “*freed*” is rendered throughout the entire Epistle “*justified*.^{*}” I can see no propriety in changing it here. The change quite misleads the common English reader, who is apt immediately to think of the freedom from sin which to the believer follows death. But this would be altogether foreign to the Apostle’s purpose. “*Justified from sin*” is an expression warranted by other occurrences of it.[†] The freedom from sin meant in this verse is freedom in the first of the two senses which have been mentioned; freedom from it as “*reigning unto death*” in its penal visitations. It is freedom from the guilt of sin, or justification. In this sense the meaning is obvious. “*Dead*” means, as explained in next verse, “*dead with Christ*.” “*He who is dead*”—that is, with Christ—having by faith an interest in his death as the death of a Surety,—is “*justified from sin*.” He is saved by this death in Christ from its condemnatory power; so that he shall “*never come into condemnation*.” And it is in virtue of the same connexion, that we have the hope of eternal life. Hence it follows—

Verse 8. “Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.”—Jesus, we have repeatedly noticed, died as a substitute for guilty men; and he arose, and ascended, and entered heaven, in the same representative character. All who are, by faith, interested in his death, are by the same faith interested in his resurrection and life. He who died to redeem his people from the curse, rose again as “*the first-fruits of them that slept*”—the “*first-born from the dead*.” And when his believing people shall be made partakers of a blessed resurrection, then, in the highest sense of the expression, they “*shall live with him*.” The future

* διδικαιωται.

† Acts xiii. 39.

form of this expression—"We *shall live*," does not signify that we are not yet in any sense partakers of the life spoken of, for we *now live* ;* but simply conveys the idea that our present conformity to his life is very imperfect—only just begun—the mere infancy of our future glorious, pure, and happy state. We "shall live *with him*," signifies that we have life in consequence and in virtue of his life;† that we shall live *where he is* ;‡ that our life shall resemble his, that we shall be *like him* ;§ and that our life shall be coeval with his—an unending life. The life we at present enjoy is life *with Christ* ; and it shall be consummated in heaven.||

That the life which we live in and with Christ is an unending life appears from verse *ninth*, of which the meaning is sufficiently obvious:—"Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." Death had for a time power over the Lord Jesus the Mediator, when he had died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was laid in the grave, and was held there for a short season under the dominion of the king of terrors. But his death was but temporary. He rose to a life over which the last enemy was never again to have power—to live *for ever* at the right hand of God.¶ In this lies the grand difference between him and others who were raised from the dead *before him*. They died again. He rose to die no more. When he "comes the second time" it shall not be in a mortal body, to die. There shall never be need for his dying again. His work was perfect; his offering complete. It needed not to be repeated. When he comes "the second time," it will be in the fulness of glorious life and triumph, to complete the purposes of his first appearance,—the great salvation which he then wrought by his death.

"*Knowing this*," says the Apostle,—"*knowing* that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." The reason is assigned in verse

* See verses 4, 5. † John xiv. 19. ‡ John xvii. 24.

§ 1 John iii. 2. || John xi. 25; Col. iii. 1—4. ¶ Acts xiii. 34.

tenth—“For in that he died, he died unto sin once ; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”

When on verse second we considered the expression “*dead to sin* ;” and adopted in preference the rendering “*dead by sin*.” We recur now (the construction being the same) to the same rendering—Jesus died *by sin*. This is equivalent to his dying *for* sin. It was sin that caused his death. It was the transgressions of sinners that slew him. This view is greatly confirmed by the accompanying word “*once*”—when we compare other passages in which the same mode of expression is used to denote the perfection of his offering, as not requiring to be repeated.* It was the Law threatening the curse that gave Death his hold of the Surety of sinners. But the death of Jesus having fully answered all the demands of justice, and silenced the charges of an accusing law, those demands and charges can never be advanced again. He hath “finished transgression and made an end of sin.” He hath fully borne the curse ; and in him it can never be repeated ; for which cause death can never again “have dominion over him.” And as he sustained the character of a substitute, for the effectual salvation of all who should believe in him, even of all who were given to him of the Father, death, considered as the curse of the Law, can never have dominion over *them*. Thus, as to the *second* death, “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”†—And even as to temporal death, though it comes to them, it comes not as a curse : it is unstinged, because *sin* is taken away, in its power to curse and to kill. It has become a friend, one who only opens the way to the full enjoyment of life and blessing. It is through the dying and rising of the Son of God that believers can sing—“O death, where is thy sting ? O grave where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”‡

* Heb. vii. 26, 27 ; ix. 24—28 ; x. 10—14.

† Rev. ii. 11.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 55—57 ; compare Rom. xiii. 11 : 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

Thus, in dying, Jesus “died *by sin*.” He made a full atonement. He finished the work given him to do. And therefore of death it “was not possible that he should be holden;” nor is it, for the same reason, possible that he should ever again come under its power. For besides—“in that he liveth, he liveth *unto God*.” Here we have the very same construction; and it would hardly be consistent to render the former “*by sin*” and this “*unto God*.” I am satisfied that the latter must also be rendered “he liveth *by God*.” The construction may not be very frequent, but neither is it very rare.* The sentiment expressed by this rendering is in full harmony with the general statements of other parts of Scripture in which Christ is represented as raised from the dead by the power of God. The representation is so frequent as to render reference useless. It is worth while, however, to notice the immediate context.† The expression suits well the Apostle’s object here. He is showing that “Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.” He shows this by stating that the life which he now enjoys is a life to which he was raised *by God* after he had died *by sin*. God, then, in giving him this life, gave him his attestation as having finished his work,—as “his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased.” Having once died *by sin*, therefore, and God having by his resurrection to life declared that *once* dying of his sufficient for all the purposes of atonement, and of the glory of his name; who can assail the life that forms the divine attestation to his death, and which, as it was *given*, is *sustained* by the power of God? “He liveth by that power;” and that power no other power can counteract. The glory of God is concerned in his living for ever:—

1. The glory of His *faithfulness*: for eternal life and blessedness were pledged to Immanuel in covenant as the reward of his work;‡ and it was in the anticipation and con-

* See Acts iii. 12; Heb. i. 2; and perhaps Luke xx. 38.

† Compare verse 4 with 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

‡ Psalm ex. 1—4; xxi. 4; Isa. ix. 6, 7, &c.

fident hope of this, that He “endured the cross, despising the shame.”*

2. The glory of His *justice*. The justice of God was honoured and fully satisfied in all its righteous demands by the death of Christ. His subsequent life is the expression on the part of God of that satisfaction. His perpetual life is a permanent declaration that in him and his finished work the everlasting righteousness of Jehovah rests for ever satisfied. Death can “never more have dominion over him:” for to inflict the penalty again would be a violation of justice.

3. The glory of His *grace*. The glory of this grace he now lives actively to promote.† By living *ever* at God’s right hand, he appears as an eternal memorial of God’s love in making Him our Mediator and Substitute—our Saviour from sin and wrath; and his permanent appearance there will keep all heaven perpetually in mind that “by the grace of God they are what they are,” owing all to the sovereign mercy of God through Jesus Christ. He shall appear as the blessed medium through which all the gifts and joys of salvation shall flow to the guilty for evermore.—Thus the power of God and all his moral attributes secure the perpetuity of the life of the risen and exalted Saviour.

On the ground of our union to Christ in his life as well as in his death, it is added in verse *eleventh*—“Therefore reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The two phrases must still of course be rendered in the same way—“dead *by sin*,” “alive *by God*.” The words are thus very strongly expressive of the general idea which we have considered as the principle of explanation for the whole passage—namely, the union of believers with Christ in his death and in his life, as the death and life of their substitute and representative. We are to reckon ourselves to be “dead”—that is, *with Christ*—“by sin;” and consequently “*justified from it*,” as we explained verse eighth, freed from its condemning sentence:—and, on the other hand, like Christ, too, “alive

* Heb. xii. 2; Psalm xvi. 8—11.

† John xvii. 2.

by God"—that is, first, by the same power that raised up Christ from the dead;* and, secondly, for the glory of God. It is for his own glory that the power of God is put forth in the physical, and so it is also in the spiritual world.† Sinners raised from spiritual death to spiritual life become at once monuments to the praise of God's rich mercy and converting power; and at the same time active agents in the advancement of the glory of his Name. They live *now*, and are heirs of a more glorious life, a life eternal beyond this transitory scene. The glory of the divine faithfulness, and justice, and grace is concerned, not only in the everlasting life of Christ himself at the right hand of the Father, but in the life with him of all whom the Father hath given him. The one comprehends the other.

In conclusion:—There is no deliverance from sin but by union to Jesus. He who by receiving Christ as an atoning Saviour, becomes a partaker in the virtue of his death, is freed from sin in its guilt and in its power. He who refuses Christ and remains united to him continues under both. But is it not a fearful thing to be under the guilt and under the power of sin? bound in its enslaving fetters, and held back by them from life and freedom and immortality? Christ died to save—he lives to save. But oh! remember, he lives also to destroy. He saves his friends; he destroys his enemies—his wilful impenitent enemies. “Kiss ye the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

* Verse 4; with Eph. i. 19, 20; ii. 4, 5.

† 1 Pet. ii. 9.

LECTURE XXIX

ROMANS VI. 12—23.

“ Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof: neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

HAVING particularly stated the important truth, which forms the principle of his argument in this chapter,—the union of believers with Christ in his vicarious death and life,*—the Apostle goes on to press more closely and pointedly *the practical application of his doctrine*.

The figure in the verses before us, which is taken up

* Verses 8—11.

through the remainder of the chapter, is that of two opposite services—the service of “God” or of “righteousness,” and the service of “sin;” the opposite and incompatible natures of the two; and the states in which they respectively terminate.

The “*reign of sin*” evidently means its present dominion over the person who is its subject. This is evident from the whole passage. Sin is personified—considered as a master exercising authority, not legitimate, indeed, but arbitrary, oppressive, and injurious—and yet an authority to which the natural man is fond to submit. In the person of every natural man it *does* reign. In one way or other, it has the dominion; in one or other of “the lusts” or *desires* referred to.

According to the construction of the original language, “*thereof*,” at the close of the twelfth verse, relates not to “*sin*” but to “*body*.”* But surely we are not to understand the Apostle as confining his exhortations to those desires alone which are directly gratified by the *body*. The spirit of the admonition must include what the Apostle elsewhere designates “lusts of the *mind*” as well as “of the flesh.”† A large proportion of our evil desires, however, gratify themselves, in one way or another, by means of the body; and the actions of the body are those by which the dominion of sin is made apparent.

To “*obey sin* in these lusts” is to yield a voluntary vassalage to this master; to be sin’s willing subjects. The very admonition evidently teaches us, that such *unholy* desires as tempt to this subjection still remain in the believer; inasmuch as there could be no danger of his yielding subjection to what was not at all present with him nor soliciting his homage, and consequently no occasion for the admonition. Sin in the believer is a dethroned tyrant that would fondly recover his power, and strives by all means to bring anew into subjection those who have thrown off his yoke. The admonition inculcates the duty of firm and steady resistance to all his attempts to regain his throne and sceptre—to reinstate himself in the dominion of the soul, and use the powers

* It is $\alpha\nu\tau\iota\tilde{\nu}$ not $\alpha\nu\tau\tilde{\eta}\varepsilon$.

† Eph. ii. 3.

and members of the body as the instruments of his usurped authority: "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

The extent of the duty, both in a negative and positive form, is more fully brought out in verse 13: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Here, again, the word "*members*," while it has more immediate reference to the "*body*," includes the powers and faculties of the soul. It has this comprehensive signification in Col. iii. 5—"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." And hence, in contrast with "not yielding *our members* as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," there stands "yielding *ourselves* unto God." The general import of the language on both sides of the alternative is sufficiently plain. "*Unrighteousness*" is every thing opposed to the Divine Law or inconsistent with its requirements.* "*Righteousness*" is entire conformity to that Law as "holy, just, and good." In the service of sin we employ our powers in doing evil as his slaves; or as soldiers under his command, waging against God the warfare of unrighteousness.—When, on the contrary, we "yield ourselves unto God," it is as a willing people, to "fulfil all righteousness;"—giving ourselves up unreservedly and entirely to God, to serve Him with full subjection; having his authority for our rule, his glory for our end, his love for our motive; seeking in every thing to know his will; and, having inscribed on all our members "*holiness unto the Lord*," to employ all of them actively in doing it.

The argument by which this admonition is enforced is couched in the word "*therefore*" in verse twelfth.—And if this word be taken in connexion with what immediately precedes, it will be found of much the same import with the expression embodied in verse thirteenth, "*As those that are alive from the dead*."

* 1 John iii. 4.

There are two views in which this expression may be understood; and they are at the same time so inseparably connected that both may with propriety be included. It may signify—either their being made alive from their former state of *spiritual* death—death “in trespasses and sins;”—or it may indicate the connexion of believers with Christ as their Surety,—their having died with him and on the same principle *risen with him*. This latter view is evidently favoured by the connexion with the twelfth verse. But as it is by their partaking or having an interest in the death of Christ as a Surety, that they are quickened from their death in sin, being thus, as it were, made alive by dying; and as this rising to new life is likened to the resurrection of Christ, *with* whom and *in* whom they are made alive,—the ideas, as I have said, cannot well be separated.*—The expression, “Yield yourselves unto God *as those that are alive from the dead*,” implies that the conduct recommended is the only conduct consistent with the nature and ends of their new life, and with the *obligations* under which they lie to its divine Author.—As to the *nature* of their new life, it is the opposite of that spiritual death in which they formerly were. If from that state of *living death*† we have been made alive, we must no longer practise the things peculiar to that state. This were incongruous and contradictory. God’s design in making us alive from the dead is his own glory, in connexion with our own everlasting blessedness and honour. When we think of this purpose *as to ourselves*, oh! what ingratitude would it be in us to overlook, and disregard, and frustrate, the purpose *as to Him*!

In verse fourteenth the Apostle presents encouragement to the duty thus inculcated.—The meaning of “being *under the law*,” will come to be fully considered on chapter seventh. I can only at present state what I understand to be its general import:—it is being under the Law for the condition of life; that is, having no other ground of acceptance with God but the one which the Law prescribes, namely perfect unsin-

* Verse 4.

† Eph. ii. 1—3.

ning obedience to all its requirements. To be "*under grace*," on the other hand,* is to have another ground of acceptance, "without the works of the law," even the perfect righteousness of Immanuel, which the grace of God has revealed in the Gospel for the justification of sinners.

Now as long as a sinner is under the Law, sin retains its "dominion over him." If from the Law he feels convictions of sin; if by these convictions and the fears engendered by them, he forms resolutions against it, and strives to render what he fancies obedience to the Law—all is vain. His resolutions fail; and their failure shows, that although outward compliance with the requisitions of sin may have been, under the influence of self-righteous fears, for a time refused; yet that sin held still the inward supremacy. Now repeated failure is discouraging, and must terminate in one or other of *three* effects:—either it must lead the ignorant and presumptuous sinner to feel the necessity of some other ground of acceptance than any he can ever form for himself, and so bring him to Christ:—or it must overwhelm him with the gloom of settled despair:—or it must lead him, hopeless of success, to give up resistance, and yield himself to the full, unbridled sway of his lusts.—Such is not the uncertain, harassing, tormenting state of him who is "*under grace*." Having renounced every thought of finding life by the Law, he is freed from the bondage of a legal spirit. Every attempt made by him before to render obedience was but the constraining effort of selfish fear. Every step he took was like the attempts of a man to walk, who is loaded and entangled with heavy and galling irons. Now, these irons have been knocked off. Being "*accepted in the Beloved*," a subject of grace, an object of paternal love, he seeks, as a son, to glorify his Father in sincere subjection and assiduous obedience to His will—running in the way of His commandments with enlargement and joy of heart. He feels his emancipation from the bondage of legal fears. He is cheered and animated in his course by the thought that he

* See chap. v. 1, 2.

is not now working for life,—and necessarily failing;—but that he is only expressing and testifying his grateful love to that God of grace who has, in rich and free mercy, *given* him life by an unmerited and gratuitous bestowment, for the sake of his Son, and who has promised that “sin shall not have dominion over him.”*

Hope and confidence are the main-springs of all exertion—the only steady supporters of persevering activity. While we seek to serve God, we are taught to look for his Spirit to aid us,—every command to spiritual duty implying in it the divine engagement and readiness to bestow the needful influence. He has given us indeed his faithful assurance that we shall never seek it in vain.†—The thought of the temptations and difficulties in the way might overwhelm us with dejection and lead us to give up the struggle as desperate:—but God’s “exceeding great and precious promises” animate us to hold on our way, giving us the cheering confidence that, although sin may obtain a temporary advantage, it shall “not have the dominion”—shall never reign over us *unto death*. Every encroachment of sin, indeed, we are to resist—to give it no quarter. He who yields to it willingly in any extent, encouraging himself by the assurance that God’s promise secures him from ever being brought under its dominion, discovers a sad inconsideration of Gospel principle, an entire forgetfulness, or something worse, of the spirit of the question—“Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?”

The Apostle accordingly anticipates the repetition of this objection in the next verse; and puts the question in such terms as at once to show how it was viewed by himself and how he should answer it:—“*What then?*” Is it a native or legitimate consequence of our being “not under the law, but under grace”—that we should encourage ourselves in the careless indulgence in sin?—“*Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?*” Is this a fair inference? Is it

* Jer. xxxi. 33, 34; xxxii. 39, 40; Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

† Luke xi. 9—13.

an inference which any one who knows the grace of God in truth will be disposed to draw? Assuredly not. It is one from which every feeling of that heart which has "tasted that the Lord is gracious," revolts with the deepest abhorrence:—and any one who should draw it, and act according to it, would discover a total ignorance of the nature and tendency of Gospel truth, and a mournful confusion of ideas.

This the next verse strongly expresses:—"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?"—He who voluntarily yields himself up as a slave to any master, and, in consequence, manifests his having done so by actually obeying the commands of that master: *he* is in reality the servant or slave of that master:—that is, it is not by profession but by conduct, not by words but by deeds, that subjection is to be ascertained. A man, whatever his professions, is *his* slave to whom he yields obedience.

The Apostle applies the general sentiment—"Whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." *Death* and *righteousness* do not appear a very direct and proper contrast. But it need not surprise us. Death is the end of the service of sin, as being its *wages*: but *life* could not consistently with truth be represented as in the same sense the end of obedience. Life is not the merited reward of our service of God, or obedience, as death is of the service of sin. "Whether of sin unto death," teaches us that death is the certain end of the service of sin:—"or of obedience unto righteousness," teaches us that the principles of obedience—the principles that actuate a true servant of God, are carried out into action in righteousness—that practical righteousness is the proper expression and manifestation of obedient principle. There is nothing deserving of the name of righteousness but obedience to the ascertained will of God: so that what God has not commanded, although it may be done professedly in His service, has no title to be called righteousness, but is will-worship; of which God may say—"Who hath required this of your hands?"

The argument of the Apostle appears to be this. If we

obey sin, we make it manifest that “sin *has* dominion over us.” But he had said of them who are “under grace,” and of them only, that “sin should *not* have dominion over them.” Those, therefore, who are under the dominion of sin show that they are *not* “under grace,” but “under the law.” They may imagine themselves to be “under grace.” They may affirm that they are, and say fine things about it: but all who are “under grace” are made “free from sin;” so that he who continues under subjection to sin, let him call himself what he will, has no part in the grace of God—is not one of *God’s* servants.*

The Apostle then reminds them directly and pointedly of their former character; and expresses his thankfulness to God for the blessed change that had taken place in them—verse 17. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.”

It is surely not necessary to prove, that the Apostle is not here to be considered as expressing gratitude to God that any rational creature of His had ever been the subject of moral corruption, and the slave of sin. The defection of a fellow-creature from his allegiance to God and from the ways of truth and rectitude, must inflict a wound, as far as the knowledge of the fact extends, on the moral feelings of the whole intelligent creation. “Tears such as angels weep” must have been shed by those sons of light, when their compeers in purity and in bliss fell from their first estate, and were cast down to hell,—tears of indignant grief for the dishonour done to their great and gracious Creator, and tears of holy pity for the wretched victims of impious and unworthy rebellion. Such too must have been their feelings when the race of man became apostate. They rejoiced in his creation; they sorrowed over his fall. And when any of this apostate family come back to their Father’s house, returning to love and subjection, “there is joy,” the very highest authority

* The mode of illustration used by the Apostle is also employed by Christ—John viii. 34—36, and by Peter, 2 Pet. ii. 19—21.

assures us, “ before the angels of God ”—yes, even over *one* such wanderer restored.

The feeling expressed by Paul in the verse before us is a feeling of lively sympathy with this angelic joy. It is not their servitude to sin, but their deliverance from it, that is the subject of his gratitude. “ Ye *were* the servants of sin.” The cause of joy, and of thanksgiving to God is that with regard to *that* part of their character he could use *past time*. The time of their subjection to sin was gone. They *had* been its slaves; they were so no longer. The two parts of the verse must be taken together, as constituting unitedly the ground of praise—and when so taken they amount to “God be thanked that *though* ye were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.”

The phrase “ *which was delivered you* ” is the exact reverse of the original, which means “ *to which ye were delivered over*. ”* And then much depends on the precise import of the word translated *form*.† Some consider it as here meaning *a mould*—and render the words, “ Ye have obeyed from the heart that mould of doctrine into which ye were delivered ”—which yields a beautiful sense, and one capable of very useful illustration—namely, that as the melted metal takes the lineaments of the mould into which it is poured, so the minds and hearts of believing sinners take the impression of Gospel truth, and the character is thus new-modelled.

It is obvious, however, that *obeying a mould* is not a very natural expression,—the word for *obeying* being the same as in the whole context in which opposite services are spoken of, as rendered to opposite masters. Another view has been suggested in harmony with the context and with the spirit and scope of the Apostle’s figurative illustration. It was the custom to impress a distinctive *mark* or *brand* on the slaves belonging to different masters. A slave might thus, by no uncommon *metonymy*, be spoken of as belonging to a certain mark,—the mark being put for the master whose mark it was;

* εἰς ὡν παρεδόθητε.

† τύπος.

and, when a slave was transferred from one master to another, as being *delivered over to a new mark* or brand, that is, to a new proprietor or master, to whom, or, by the same figure, to whose mark he was then to consider his person attached and his service and obedience due. This is probably the true meaning,—“Ye have obeyed from the heart that mark (or brand) of doctrine to which ye have been delivered over;” this translation giving every word its full and proper effect. They passed from one service to another, distinguished by a new mark, to which, as reminding them of their new master, and the appropriate symbol of his property in them and his power over them, they were thenceforward to render their obedient service. The “*doctrine*” of Christ is the distinguishing badge, or appropriate mark, of all his servants. They bear the profession and impress of his truth; and, under the influence of that truth, they serve him as the master who has stamped its impression upon them, in a spirit of reverential love.—The two interpretations mentioned yield the same general idea. “*Obeying* from the heart this *doctrine*” means, in either view, giving up the heart to its native and appropriate influence. In the one view it is *taking its impression*, in the other it is *yielding to its power*: but the effect upon the character is the same. There is a connexion intimated in the words between the reception of the doctrine and the subsequent character. The character arises from, and may be said to consist in, *obedience to the doctrine*.

When the Apostle *thanks God* for the transition they had made, he does so, because God was himself the author of the change; and his heart rejoiced in contemplating it. His joy and praise were the dictate at once of piety and of benevolence. He was thankful on *God's* account, on *their own* account, and on account of *others*. The change was *glorifying to God*. It was honourable to the divine character, as the works of an author manifest his principles and dispositions. God was glorified in man when he bore His image at his first creation; and God is glorified in converted sinners, when that image is restored to their souls. Every such sinner, moreover,

becomes a trophy of the power and riches and freeness of Divine grace ;—and at the same time a new and zealous agent commanding his name, and promoting his honour. The change was *happy for themselves*. Its effects were such as every kind and holy nature must delight in. In passing from the service of sin to that of God, they came into the present enjoyment of Divine favour—walking and working in the light of God's countenance, and in the possession and expectation of all the blessings of God's salvation. Paul knew the two services by experience. He felt the happiness of the change himself, and he could not but exult in joyous sympathy with all who were brought to the participation of it.—The change too was *useful to others*. Every man in society has his circle of either hurtful or salutary influence. The example of a wicked man, a “servant of sin,” is pernicious and deadly. His influence, as far as it extends, contributes to the destruction of all that is good ; and it passes down from generation to generation, so that there is no calculating its ultimate amount of mischief. When a change of character is effected, the influence is entirely changed. It *was* evil ; now it is good,—every tendency happily reversed. The new influence goes to correct the effects of the old. It no longer communicates the deadly taint of corruption, but operates as an antiseptic, preventing and removing it.* It becomes a permanent spring of purity and joy.

The practical “service of righteousness,” or of God, alone proves a man to have ceased to be the “servant of sin :”—verse 18. “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” It is possible for a man to take the name and to assume the livery of a new master, only that, in some way or other, he may the more effectually perform the service of the old. Thus a man may take the name of Christ and do the works of the devil. He may take upon him the profession and the externalities of saintship, while his heart is still with the world and he continues to follow its courses. But such a man is as much, or even more than

* Matt. v. 13—16.

before, the “servant of sin.” His very hypocrisy is a part of that service, being intended only to answer some of its purposes. The admonition of Jesus to his disciples was “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The Apostle, aware of this weakness, accommodates his illustrations and modes of persuasion to what he calls (ver. 19.) “*the infirmity of their flesh*”—meaning thereby not the weakness of the principles of remaining corruption *in their own department of operation*; but the weakness of those whom he addresses, arising from “the flesh,” to resist the allurements to their former service; and the need in which they consequently stood of having every view suggested to them at all fitted to give correctness and enlargement to the conceptions entertained by them of their condition and responsibility, and to stimulate them to activity and endurance in their new service. Under the figure chosen for this purpose, he brings before them the duty of *making up* in the service of the new Master the time and effort they had worse than lost in that of the old. This seems the *spirit* of the admonition which follows. Their old master had ruled over them with “a rod of iron,” although with the semblance of flattering indulgence. His sway was that of a malignant, injurious, and destroying tyrant. Their new Master ruled them in love; smiling upon them in the service they rendered, and blessing them with inward peace and joy, and with the good hope of eternal life and happiness at the close, in “the land of sacred liberty and endless rest.” Surely, then, it would ill become them, to be less unreserved and hearty in their devotedness to the latter than they had been to the former: “As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” They had given themselves up to the service of impure and of iniquitous principles and desires; and of this the product was “*iniquity*”—*progressive* iniquity—one act and one stage of the service only preparing for and leading on to another. Their “yielding their members servants to righteousness”

would, on the other hand, have for its product increase of purity and progressive “*holiness*.”

The consideration of having served sin is a motive to the service of God which could not of course be urged on creatures that have retained the principles of its original holy allegiance to Him. No: happily for *such* creatures, the considerations by which they are induced to continue in God’s service are all of another kind. And yet the *principle* of them is the same,—the inalienable title of the infinite Creator to the unreserved homage and the practical devotedness of all His rational offspring. Time spent in the service of sin is time *stolen* from God. The same holds true of every power and faculty, of every talent and acquisition. All are God’s. To use them in the service of sin is to “rob God.” And in proportion to the consciousness of such robbery,—the consciousness of having alienated what of right belongs to God to his great enemy,—must be the assiduity, the activity and earnestness, when His claim as the only rightful Master is recognized, to serve Him with entire and unreserved consecration.

The Apostle admits that in their former state they did possess a species of liberty—verse 20. “For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.” What a fearful description of freedom! It is the only form in which liberty, the theme of the patriot’s eloquence and the poet’s song, is not a blessing. Yet is it a liberty in which men are abundantly disposed to glory. When they feel not the obligations of “righteousness;” when they “break its bands asunder, and cast away its cords from them,” and refuse all obedience to its dictates,—they imagine and call this liberty. They exult in it, and invite others to a participation in their vaunted freedom. But they are, in truth, “the slaves of corruption;” and glory in their shame. The only way in which this freedom can be enjoyed to purpose is by a process the most awful to which the mind of a rational creature can be subjected—a process of hardening and cauterizing, such as produces a total insensibility and callousness of conscience, which leaves the mind undis-

turbed by any check or any reproach. This is the highest freedom which sin can bestow,—the state in which her service is most thoroughly enjoyed. But surely the man who has come to this may well be said to be *cursed* with liberty.

The Apostle accordingly makes an appeal to themselves as to the comparative desirableness of the two services, in three points of view;—As to present enjoyment, as to subsequent reflection, and as to ultimate consequences.

1. As to *present enjoyment*: “*What fruit had ye then?*” The “fruit” of particular principles is the conduct which these principles produce:—The fruit of a particular course of conduct the effects which arise from it—the consequences to which it leads. *This* is evidently the meaning here.

He appeals to themselves whether their new service was not even now a happier, more honourable and more useful service than that in which they had before been engaged: whether the present fruit of the one was not sweeter and better far than that of the other, richer in its relish and more excellent in its nature. “*What fruit!*”—“*Wild grapes*,” “*clusters that were bitter*;” “*grapes of gall*.” Such were the fruits, if we understand the question as meaning what *kind* of fruit had ye? But in another view it may strongly convey, as such questions often do, their having had *no* fruit; in which case “*fruit*” signifies *benefit*. And well might he put the question in this form. Is it not a fair and just description of the service of sin which this Apostle elsewhere gives, when he denominates it “*the unfruitful works of darkness?*”—It is true, there *are* pleasures in sin. These are the allurements to its service. These are the enticements the master, to whom the great majority of mankind yield themselves as subjects, holds out to the doing of his work; these the tempting “*fruits*” he offers. Yet still, amid the full enjoyment of these pleasures, the question may still be emphatically put—*What fruit have they?* Is there any real solid satisfaction worthy of a rational, immortal, accountable being?

What fruit in *prosperity*—from the ungodly use of divine bounties? It is true, as I have said, that the more thoroughly

a man can divest himself of all the restraints of moral and religious principle,—the more thoroughly insensible his conscience becomes,—the more complete will be his enjoyment in the service of sin. But is it not fearful for a reasonable creature to call that a relish to prosperity which is the deepest curse with which humanity can load itself—the curse of moral insensibility?—How different, how much purer, richer, and worthier is the relish imparted to prosperity by the service of God! All that comes to the spiritual man, the servant of God, comes from the hand of a Father's love, and is enjoyed with his benignant smile and blessing. Received with gratitude, it is used with cheerfulness and submission, and is applied to purposes approved by the Giver, and yielding a return of genuine pleasure, superior to anything in the entire round of sensual gratification. *He* enjoys this world best, who receives it *from* God, uses it *for* God, and enjoys God *with* it.

And in *adversity*,—What fruit of his service has the slave of sin? What has he, when prosperity is withdrawn? Has the master whom he serves any comfort for him *then*? any stay to his sinking heart,—any balm for the woes of a wounded spirit? Will this master stand by his faithful servants as a friend in need? Alas! wretched man! if, having served sin, he looks to sin for comfort! While prosperity continued, all was devoted to the service of this master:—the poor slave was taxed to the uttermost for the pampering of the “lusts of the flesh,” and when these have got all, the tyrant has nothing for his infatuated and abject drudge but the smile of bitter scorn, or the stingings of angry reproach. How different in adversity the condition of the servant of God! The Master whom *he* serves is “the God of all comfort.” He has a sweeter smile for his faithful servants in their distresses than in their prosperity. His countenance is lifted up upon them with a brighter and lovelier radiance. His eye beams upon them through the tear of sympathising tenderness. He “sheds his love abroad in their hearts.” He gives them “everlasting consolation and good hope.” And in **HIMSELF** they still retain “the portion of their inheritance and cup.”

When He covers their sky with clouds, He “paints a rainbow on the storm;” and the darker the cloud, the brighter are the tints of the symbol of reconciliation and peace!—Say, ye servants of God, What fruit has His service yielded you in the season of sorrow? Has He been to you a “wilderness and a land of drought?” On the contrary, has not His “fruit” in such seasons above all others, been “sweet unto your taste?” And has not “the fruit of affliction been to take away sin?”—the highest and richest of all profit, the profit which your divine Master and Father intends you should reap from all your trials.*

Such is the fruit which the Apostle here ascribes to this service generally—“Ye have your fruit unto *holiness*.” This expression looks as if the Apostle were rather speaking of the practical results of the principles of each service rather than of the enjoyment resulting from the services themselves. But the two are inseparably united. “Fruit unto holiness” is fruit unto happiness: and it is the holiness of the fruit produced in the service of God that renders it productive of happiness—happiness like to that of God himself.

2. There is a contrast as to *subsequent reflection*. The service of sin is a service of which all who ever come to see it aright *are ashamed*†—a feeling which can never have place as to the service of God—except indeed the shame of having so imperfectly fulfilled its duties.

They are ashamed of their *folly*. O there is no folly, no infatuation, like that which prefers the service of sin to the service of God! It is the preference of degradation to honour; of abject vileness to the highest dignity of a created nature; of the most miserable of slaveries to the most blessed of liberties; of earth to heaven; of time to eternity; of Satan to God!

They are ashamed of their *ingratitude*. When they think of God as the God of infinite goodness; the eternal Source of every joy, who made men all that they are except in sinfulness; who gives them all they have, and “has not spared

* Heb. xii. 8—11.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 31, 32; xvi. 62, 63.

his own Son," and offers them in his name all the blessing of His love, "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore;" and feel aright their obligations to Him,—they look back with shame and bitter self-reproach on the vileness of that ingratitude which their previous course involved. They blush for their unthankfulness; for the baseness of having lived in rebellion against rich and unmerited kindness; and especially of having slighted the mercy of Him who was ever stretching to them the arms of His grace, and complaining that they would not come to Him that they might have life.

3. The services are contrasted in their *ultimate consequences*—their respective "*ends*:"—verses 21, 22. "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the *end* of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the *end* everlasting life." *Death* and *life* cannot be consistently understood otherwise here than as signifying the *final* state or condition, respectively, of the "servants of sin" and the "servants of God." "Death" is the *end* of the one; "life" of the other. If ever a period were to arrive when the *death* should be followed by *life*, the declaration here would cease to be true: the end or final condition would be *life* not *death*.* O how different the ends of the two services! The one closes in eternal confirmation in sin,—alienation from God,—a sense of His wrath,—and consequent misery; the other in eternal confirmation in perfected holiness,—spotless likeness to God,—communion with Him, the enjoyment of His love, unmarred and uninterrupted by sin,—and consequent happiness,—happiness without alloy, without abatement, and without cessation.

But while such are the ends, respectively, of the two services, there is one marked difference between them. The one is **WAGES**—a merited reward—the other a **GIFT**—a gratuitous bestowment—"FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH: BUT THE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD."

* Compare Lect. xxiv. p. 9. and John iii. 36.

LECTURE XXX.

ROMANS VII. 1—6.

“Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

THE Apostle is by not a few interpreters understood as speaking in these verses of the freedom of the Jews from the *ceremonial* law of Moses in consequence of the coming of Christ. But this seems to me quite a mistake. That it is not of the ceremonial but of the moral law the Apostle speaks, and that in his reasoning he has in view not the state of the Jews only, but of Jews and Gentiles alike as *believing sinners*, will appear from the following considerations:—

1. In the previous part of the Epistle, through the whole of the argument on justification, the reference, as we have seen, is evidently to the *moral* law;—not exclusively indeed, but principally; the object of the Apostle being to set aside works of *every kind* from having any thing to do in regard to the ground of acceptance with God. He refers to *both*,

but especially to that law which changes not; which was the rule of duty from the beginning; and perfect personal obedience to which was the original and natural condition of life to man.*

2. What is, in this very chapter, affirmed of the Law as to its effects, shows clearly that it is of the moral law the Apostle speaks. Thus (v. 7.) “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” It is by the moral law, as requiring perfect obedience, that the knowledge of sin is brought to the mind and conscience. It was the view of the spirituality and extent of this law that discovered to the Apostle the measure of his guilt, and “slew” his legal hopes.

3. If by being “*dead to the law*,” the Apostle meant being delivered from the *ceremonial* law, it would unavoidably follow, that none who were formerly under that law, could have any connexion with Christ, or could serve God at all “in newness of spirit.” And further,—if the entire renunciation of the obligation and observance of the ceremonial law was indispensable to their being “married to Christ” and to their “bringing forth fruit unto God,” it will not be easy, on any principle, to vindicate the Apostle and his associates from the charge of very inconsistent duplicity in their conduct to the believing Jews. These believing Jews were “zealous of the law.” Paul himself continued an observer of it, at least in many things, in conformity to Jewish custom and prejudice, even although he felt his own liberty. But if we consider him as in this passage directly establishing not merely the freedom of the Jews from the observance of the ceremonial law, but even the inconsistency and incompatibility of such observance with their being “married to Christ,”—his conduct when he afterwards visited Jerusalem,† seems to lay him open to a charge

* See in evidence of this—chap. ii. 12—16. Also the latter part of the same chapter, in which all the enumerated transgressions are of a moral nature—chap. ii. 17—24; iii. 19, 20, 31; v. 13, 20.

† Acts xxi. 20—26.

worse even than that of hypocrisy,—the charge of misleading men by an example opposed to his explicit instructions, into a course such as, on this supposition, was not compatible with their salvation. For he surely who was “zealous of the Law” could not be “married to Christ,” if conscious freedom from all obligation to observe it was essential to this union. It will not remove this difficulty to say, that he means freedom from the ceremonial law *as the condition of life*; inasmuch as subjection to *that* law never *was* the condition of life.

He addresses such as “*knew the law*.” He may mean all to whom the Epistle was written. It is not necessary to limit the expression to the Jewish believers. Yet it is likely that the Jewish believers were especially in the Apostle’s eye; and he may be considered as *appealing*, when he made use of this illustration, to those Jews who were amongst the believers at Rome, to explain and confirm it to their brethren.—He puts the question (v. 1) “Know ye not, how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?” Some insist that the pronoun *it* should be substituted for *he*,* conceiving the reference to be to *the law*. This is in order to render the comparison employed more exact—verses 2, 3. “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man:”—as the woman is thus freed by the death of him to whom she was married; so believers are freed by the death or cessation of that to which they, in the figure, were married—freed from the Law by the death of the Law. But this, however natural it may at first view seem, does not accord with the current phraseology of the Apostle, in which it is *the believer* that is represented as dying—dying in and with Christ, and

* The Greek will bear either rendering, the pronoun not being expressed.—ED.

so obtaining the deliverance in question.* The sixth verse appears like an exception to this, and favourable to the view just given of the Law, as being, in the figure, the party that dies: “we are delivered from the law, *that being dead* wherein we were held.” But the decided preponderance of authority of the versions and MSS. is in favour of another reading, in which there is but one letter of difference:†—“*being dead*, we are delivered from the law, by which we were held.”

It is quite needless to enlarge on the explanation of the case adduced for comparison in the second and third verses. It is sufficiently understood by all. The declaration of course must be taken in harmony with previously specified and admitted exceptions. There is at least *one* case in which the marriage bond is dissolved, short of death.‡ But the Apostle takes the general law, that the union is *for life*. It is not at all the case itself but the comparison that stands in need of illustration.—Verse 4. “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”

This verse brings before us a variety of topics—The believer’s former connexion with the Law:—the dissolution of that connexion, with the means of it:—his new relation to Christ:—the consistency of this new connexion with the rights and claims of the first husband:—the blessed effects of the new connexion contrasted with the miserable fruits of the old:—and the connexion between the change of state and the change of character.

Of the nature of the relation which every man, as a subject of God’s moral government, sustains to the Law, we have had occasion to say so much, that it is quite unnecessary to enlarge upon it. Its claim is thus briefly ex-

* Chap. vi. 7, 8.

† ἀποθανότες instead of ἀποθανόντος. “The latter,” says Alford, “cannot even be brought into discussion, as it appears to be only a conjecture of Beza’s arising from a misunderstanding of the text.”—Ed.

‡ Matt. xix. 3—9.

pressed in a subsequent chapter:—“That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.”* Considered in the figurative capacity of a husband, it had a right to full and implicit subjection. In requiring sinless obedience it required no more than what was its due; and it justly threatened a curse for every trespass.† To be thus related to the Law, then, means to be bound to perfect obedience as *the sole condition of life*. But alas!—they, as well as all mankind, had failed of this obedience. They had violated the authority of this first husband; they had abused his rights, and resisted his claims, and had thus exposed themselves to the fatal consequences of his just denunciations. Being “married to the law,” therefore, means being under authority which is righteous, and which cannot cease,—authority which we have violated, and of which the violation has exposed us to wrath.—Yet, miserable as this state is, men in general are insensible of it. They still show attachment to the Law, like that of a wife to her husband;—not the attachment of obedience, but attachment despite their *disobedience*; and place, as a wife does on her husband, infatuated dependence upon it for their safety and well-being. This is our strong delusion; that we persist in looking for life from one who has peremptorily and inexorably pronounced upon us the doom of death. As God of old said to Eve, “Thy desire shall be to thy husband,” so it is with the sinner as to the Law. He cleaves to it. He persists in looking to it for safety, while it continues incessantly repeating the same language of condemnation and curse.

The dissolution of such connexion with the Law consists of course in the sinner’s deliverance from the obligation to perfect personal obedience as *the sole condition of life*, and from the curse attending disobedience. The question is, When and how does this deliverance take place? The answer is to be found in the words—“The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth.” . . . “Ye are become dead to the law.” Here is the decease of one of

* Rom. x. 5.

† Gal. iii. 10.

the parties, by which the union is dissolved. *What is this decease or death?* I have no hesitation on the point. It refers to what we have had occasion to speak of particularly on the 7th and 8th verses of the sixth chapter—the death of the believer *with* or *in Christ*. Christ's death, we then showed you, is considered as virtually *his*. He dies in Christ; and by his dying in Christ his connexion with the Law is dissolved. This is the evident import of the phrase in verse fourth—“Ye are become dead to the law *by the body of Christ*”—that is, by “*Christ crucified*.” The death of Jesus being the curse of the law borne in their stead, sets them free from the possibility of its coming upon them.* Thus the effects, as it were, of the first husband's displeasure cannot reach them.

Nor is the meaning only that the curse of the Law is removed: but by “the body of Christ”—the confidence of the sinner in the Law, his dependence upon it, is destroyed. Whenever he knows “Jesus Christ and him crucified,” his connexion with it, *as a condition of life*, is for ever done away, as effectually as the relation between husband and wife is dissolved by the death of one of the parties.

He is then “*married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead*, that he should bring forth fruit unto God.” This expresses the union of the believer with Jesus, his subjection to Him, his dependence on Him, his blessedness in Him.† To this new husband all believers are *subject*.‡ They feel his authority as the authority at once of rightful claim and of tender affection. They delight in obeying him who loves them.—On him, too, they now *depend*. Having renounced dependence on the Law, they now rest for all the happiness they desire and need, for time and for eternity, on Jesus alone. And in Him, their new Husband, they are truly blessed. He smiles upon them, and enriches them with a dowry of precious spiritual treasures.

* Gal. iii. 13.

† The comparison is not infrequent. Eph. v. 30—32; John iii. 29; Rev. xxi. 2.

‡ Eph. v. 22, &c.

This connexion, being with "him who is raised from the dead," is *indissoluble and everlasting*.* This husband never dies; nor do they ever die to whom he stands thus related. When the connexion with the Law is dissolved, it is dissolved *for ever*; when the connexion with Christ is formed, it is formed for ever. "Joined to the Lord, they are one spirit;" and the spiritual union is lasting as eternity.

It is important to remember, that this new connexion is in perfect consistency with all the rights and claims of the *first* husband. These claims were altogether just and honourable, and had a right to be fully implemented. The believer has not satisfied them in his own person; but his Substitute has rendered the obedience which he owed, and borne the penalty which he deserved; by which the Law has been "magnified and made honourable." Hence the Law's claims upon him for the condition of life cease as completely as the claims of a husband when dead on the subjection of the surviving wife, and on her remaining his alone. It is thus "by the body of Christ"—by his sufferings endured in the "body that was prepared for him," that the relation between believers and the Law is dissolved, in a manner fully honourable to all the just demands of the latter;—without any compromise of them whatever.—In this (to drop the metaphor) is the glory of the Gospel, that the salvation which it reveals through union with Christ is in full consistency with all the perfect requirements and unrepealable sanctions of the Law.

The nature of the figure, and the Apostle's modes of expression, teach us further, the absolute necessity of the dissolution of all connexion with the Law, in order to a sinner's being joined to Christ.† The two connexions cannot subsist together. The sinner who is joined to Christ must *die completely to the Law*. While he retains any connexion with it, in the way of seeking or expecting life from it, he is not united to Christ. The declaration of God that sinners must be saved by union to Jesus *alone* is as peremptory as the

* Chap. vi. 9.

† Verses 2, 3.

command, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Let those who profess to be united to him remember this, and beware of all returning to and dependence upon the Law. As the worship of idols was styled adultery, when practised of old by that people whom Jehovah had espoused to himself—so all such connexion with the Law is adultery against Christ, unfaithfulness to our divine Husband. Every secret hankering after dependence on the Law is infidelity to HIM. He must be "all our salvation, and all our desire."

Let no one wilfully and perversely misunderstand what has been said, as if we were pleading for the emancipation of believers from all subjection to the Law as *the rule of their life*. No. The obligation of the Law as the rule of life remains immutable.*

Accordingly, what are the blessed design and effect of the dissolution of the connexion with the Law, and the formation of the union with Christ? They are the "*bringing forth fruit unto God*"—fruit such as God requires and approves,—fruit to the praise and glory of his Name. The fruit meant is the fruit, no doubt, of holy obedience and service.† But the peculiar figure used seems to suggest the idea, that such fruit is as naturally the effect of the union of the believer to Christ as the fruit of the womb is the expected result of the marriage relation. The expression forcibly implies, that no fruit truly good and acceptable in the sight of God had been or could be produced while the former connexion continued. And this sentiment is strongly expressed in the verses which follow.

Verse 5. "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." The phrase "*in the flesh*" we shall have before us in subsequent parts of the Epistle, in which its explanation will be particularly necessary. It evidently cannot here mean being under the carnal Mosaic economy: for assuredly it is not true, that they who were under that economy could not, in consequence of it, bring

* Chap. iii. 31; 1 Cor. ix. 21, &c.

† Chap. vi. 22,

forth any fruit unto God, but only unto death.* It signifies being under the dominion of corrupt nature—of “the old man with his deceitful lusts.”

“The motions or affections of sins *which were by the law*” is a mode of expression which I am unable otherwise to understand than as expressing the *excitation* which the evil desires of the heart derived from the very prohibition of their indulgence. The pride of the heart does not relish restraint. It is gratified in overleaping boundaries and opposing authority. It likes to have its own way; and the very attempt to counteract it only provokes it to resistance. Thus the very prohibition of evil becomes, through the power of corruption, an excitement to the commission of it. Forbidden fruit has been, ever since the first sin, proverbially tempting. This is no disparagement to the Law. It is perfect. It is “holy and just and good.” The disparagement is to the nature that is so opposed to it. If the nature were right, instead of being fretted by its prohibitions, and stirred up by the very restraint to disobey them—it would hate what the Law forbids, and delight in what the Law enjoins. It is no disparagement to the Gospel, that by the collision of its holy and humbling principles with the corruption and pride of the human heart, it has been the innocent occasion of evils. It is the glory both of the Law and the Gospel that they are thus opposed to human depravity.

“The motions, affections, or likings of sins, which were by the law, *did work in our members*”—influencing the dispositions of the mind, and through them the members of the body to action; and of this the “fruit” was sin—and all sin is “unto death.”† They who are “under the law are in the flesh;” and while in this state, however specious and externally fair the appearances which they may assume, they can bring forth no fruit but “unto death.” All is secretly devoid of that only principle from which any acceptable service can spring—“faith working by love.” There is no true fruit unto God produced till the connexion with the Law has been

* See for its meaning verses 14, 18, and chap. viii. 5—8.

† See chap. vi. 21, 23; James i. 13—15.

dissolved, and that with Christ has been formed—verse 6. “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

I have already mentioned the proper translation of this verse:—“But now, being dead, we are delivered from the law, whereby we were held.” The sense, indeed, is much the same, which way soever we take the explanation of the figure; whether we be dead to the Law, or the Law dead to us. The general idea is the dissolution of the connexion by the death of one of the parties:—and the end is—“That we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.”

This is the divine design—and this the invariable consequence. By serving *“in the oldness of the letter”* some would have us understand serving according to the outward literal obedience which the Law of old required. But we cannot admit the assumption that at any time, under any dispensation, the Law of God *did* require, as satisfactory to God, obedience that was merely external and independent of the heart. The Law of God has always been, in the very letter of it—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”

For understanding the words, let me refer you to 2 Cor. iii. 6—8: “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?” Although the ceremonial part of the Law could not *“give life,”* yet neither could it, with propriety, be said *“to kill.”* It rather pointed out the way of life. But the moral law, *“written and engraven on stones,”* was *“the ministration of death.”* *This letter killed;* and it shut up the sinner in

despair, giving him no hope. The *letter*, or *writing*, in the passage before us, appears to have the same meaning.—To “serve in the oldness of the letter,” will therefore mean such a service as a sinner may attempt to render while “under the law,” and without the Spirit: such as he might render under the influence of the authority, light, and terror of the Law, while himself yet “in the flesh.” The fears of the Law, uniting with the pride of self-righteousness, may set a poor sinner to work; and may produce considerable outward conformity of behaviour to the precepts of the Law; whilst there is no true principle of godliness within; nothing but a carnal, selfish, proud, self-righteous disposition,—a fear of punishment, but a love of sin and a hatred of God. There may be much in the eyes of men that is amiable; while in the sight of God all the service is rendered in the “oldness of the letter”—under the influence of the principles of the old nature.—Opposed to the “oldness of the letter” is “*newness of spirit*.” To serve God in “newness of spirit” is to serve him in sincerity, under the influence of those principles and views and dispositions which constitute a mind renewed by the Spirit of God. There is a correspondence of phraseology to that of the ancient promise—“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”* The serving of God in “newness of spirit” is serving him from the impulse of those new principles which are thus divinely introduced into the soul. The first and leading distinction of this service from the other is, that it is not rendered *with a view to acceptance*, but *from having found it*. It is service from the principle of holy thankful love; from a supreme and fervent desire to please and honour God, on account of all that he *is*, and of all that by Jesus Christ he hath *done*. It is service performed in humility, under the influence, not of self-righteous pride, but of deep self-abasement and a sense of utter unworthiness,—a disposition to say, “We are unprofitable servants.”†

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

† Comp. Phil. iii. 3—14.

LECTURE XXXI

ROMANS VII. 7—13.

“What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said. Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”

WE often learn the exact import of a writer's phraseology, from the objections which he supposes may be made to his statements. The observation is, in different instances, exemplified in this Epistle. Of these instances we have one before us. The Apostle had just spoken of the “motions of sins which were by the law.” We explained this as meaning the excitement derived by the evil affections of the heart, or its likings to sin, from the very prohibition of it by the Law. And that this is the meaning appears from its so naturally suggesting the question which immediately follows in verse seventh—“What shall we then say? *Is the law sin?*” Is it in itself sinful, or has it in its own nature any thing tending to produce or lead to sin? This were a most injurious imputation. The Apostle therefore proceeds to vindicate the Law from any such foul aspersion. According to his usual manner, he first reprobates it with indig-

nant abhorrence—"God forbid;" and then silences the supposed objector by his own experience,—that experience, at the same time, evidently involving general principles. The Apostle cannot mean that he would have been entirely unacquainted with sin, and unconscious of guilt but for the *written* Law. He had intimated the contrary.* But since the conscience partakes of the depravity of our fallen nature, and is liable to perversion, and bias, and error, by circumstances that operate with seductive or intimidating influence, it may be granted that without the written law the knowledge of duty, and consequently "the knowledge of sin," would be extremely imperfect and erroneous. But alas! even *with* the written law, a man's knowledge of sin may be most defective and mistaken, and the convictions of it in his conscience sadly general and feeble;—because, with the writing in his hands, he may have no just conception in his mind of the full extent and spirituality of its requisitions. Such, according to his own account of his experience, had been the case with Paul. *Thou shalt not covet*" had all along stood in the Statute Book, and held a place even in "the tables of the covenant:" yet long had he lived without any thought of the heart-searching nature of the divine precepts—*this* as well as others.

There are two remarks which I wish to make in regard to the *phraseology* of the entire passage before going into its details:—

1. Our translators have used, for the sake of variety, diverse words for the same thing, "lust," "covet," "concupiscence."† This may seem of little moment; and yet I apprehend, it very considerably injures the simplicity and beauty of the illustration and argument:—

2. You will observe that the Apostle speaks of "*the law*"‡ and "*the commandment*,"§ as if they were *distinct*.|| I was once of opinion that this was designed merely for greater force and emphasis—"the *law* and the *commandment*" meaning

* Chap. ii. 14, 15.
§ ἵττολη.

† Verses 7, 8.
|| Verse 12.

‡ νόμος.

the same thing. I am now satisfied it is otherwise; and that, while “the *law*” is the moral law generally, “*the commandment*” means *that particular precept* which he here specifies as having been the means of opening his mind to a proper view of the Law’s spirituality.

I would add to these remarks a third: namely, that the division of verses eighth to the tenth greatly mars the force of a contrast which is there drawn by the Apostle between his previous and his subsequent views, impressions, and hopes, regarding himself. The latter part of verse eighth should be taken with verse ninth thus—“For without the law sin is dead; and without the law I was formerly alive: but this commandment coming, sin came to life, and I died.” This makes the antithesis simple and complete; and the rendering is more literal: the two *fors* are not in the original; the latter is simply *and*; a second *for* is not natural, and spoils the sense. The antithesis is—formerly “sin was dead, and I was alive,” but “sin came to life and I died:” and he assigns, as we shall see, the reason of both.

I propose the following as a literal and more simple translation of the passage from verse 7th to verse 13th. “What shall we then say? Is the law sin? Far be it! Nay, I had not known sin unless by means of the law: for I had not known, for instance, (the sin of) covetousness, if the law had not said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking the advantage, wrought in me by means of this commandment, all covetous desire. For without the law sin is dead; and without the law I was formerly alive: but this commandment coming, sin came to life, and I died: and this commandment which was given for life, was found by me to produce death. For sin, taking the advantage, seduced me by means of this commandment, and by means of it too slew me. The law, therefore is holy, and this commandment is holy, and just, and good. Did that which is good, then, become death unto me? Far be it: but rather sin; that sin might appear producing death in me by that which is good,—that so, by means of the commandment, sin might become exceeding sinful.”

There are two things, then, which are stated in the beginning of this passage. The *first* is the general principle already noticed—that the Apostle's knowledge of *sin*, as every one's must be, was “*by the law* :” the *second* is, that his knowledge of what may be called *heart-sin*, or the sinfulness of inward desire after forbidden objects, although not carried out into action, was *by a particular precept* of the Law.

We need not perhaps consider the Apostle as meaning that he would not, but for this precept, have had *any sense at all* of the criminality of inward desires; for this the heathens themselves, in some cases, admitted. But certainly every man's heart will tell him, how very little he is disposed to view these as sins deserving the death threatened by the divine law against transgression. Yet such is the law. Every motion of *envy* we ever have felt rising in our hearts, every secret inclination after what is not our own, though buried in our bosoms in studied silence, is a sin in the sight of the Searcher of hearts,—a sin incurring condemnation.

But while this precept showed him the evil of desires properly *covetous*, he evidently intimates that he was taught by it a more general lesson. By this particular instance he was led to infer the criminality of all secret desire in the heart after the violation of *any* of God's commands. The last of the ten precepts of the covenant afforded a key, or principle of interpretation, for all the rest. The obvious spirituality of that implied the spirituality of each of the other nine; and indeed of every precept of the omniscient Lawgiver. If in *this* His law reaches to the heart, why not in other things? For example:—If it be wrong to *covet*, it must be a trespass against the *first* commandment to regard a strange god in the heart, although that regard should never be expressed by the bowing of the knee, the utterance of words, or any outward act of homage. On the same principle, secret irreverence of the divine Name, associating it in the mind and heart with trifling and unworthy things, and not feeling its awe-inspiring influence, is a breach of the third commandment—it is “*taking that name in vain* :”—a secret dislike of the Sabbath,—an inward disdain of its employments,

is a failing to "keep it holy," with whatever external decorum and constrained punctuality it may be observed:—and disregard and contempt of parents in the heart, every secret feeling inconsistent with respect and love, is a violation of the command—"Honour thy father and thy mother." For confirmation of all this, we have only to look to our Lord's own interpretation of the next two precepts of the Law.* He makes causeless anger murder,† and a lascivious imagination and look adultery. And this is not to be understood as a *new interpretation* put upon the Law, but as the restoration of its true original import, in opposition to the false and unworthy glosses of the Jewish teachers. The existence of *one* precept in the ten, expressed in terms directly prohibitory of the *inward disposition* is assumed by the Apostle as evidence that the whole law was to be so understood—as proof of the general position in verse fourteenth, "THE LAW IS SPIRITUAL."

Having thus vindicated the Law, showing that instead of being itself sin, it is, by its very spirituality and purity, the means of detecting sin,—he shows the import of the phrase he had before used—"The motions of sins which were by the law:"—Verse 8. "For sin, taking occasion"—taking or availing itself of the advantage‡—"wrought in me by means of this commandment, all covetous desire."

I have already noticed, that the word for *concupiscence* is the very same as that for *covet*: and it seems to me that the Apostle selects this instance as an exemplification of the general principle of "the motions of sins being by the law." *Sin* here, and in all the subsequent reasoning, evidently signifies the sinful principles of corrupt nature—the love of evil.§

"Sin took occasion by the commandment." The commandment itself did not give it; it was taken by sin, in perverse opposition to the commandment.

* See Matt. v. 21, 22; 27, 28.

† Comp. 1 John iii. 15.

‡ ἀφορμὴν λαβοῦσα: ἀφορμὴ "indicates the furnishing the material and ground of attack."—ED.

§ See verses 17, 20.

The knowledge of the Law will not subdue sin in the heart. Nothing does, or can do, this, but that which inspires love to God. Now this the Law cannot do. The more it is known, the more it shows the spotless holiness of God; and the more, instead of subduing, must it irritate the native enmity of the heart. If “enmity against God” be indeed the character of the heart, it is not difficult to perceive, surely, how the desire of transgression, the propensity to trespass, should strengthen rather than weaken, in proportion as any one who continues “in the flesh,” has any discernment of the Law’s spirituality. If we bear hatred to any man whom we know at the same time to have a right to command us, the more strict and peremptory his injunctions are, the stronger inclination do we feel to disobey them. The purity of the Law meeting the enmity of the heart is like a rock thrown into the course of a rapid stream; which only has the effect of making it rage and foam, and struggle to get past the obstacle: and the more rapid the stream, the more furious is the chafing and the turbulence. Thus it is that where there is hatred, every interposition of authority irritates opposition. We resemble, in this respect, self-willed and unruly children, who, the more they are enjoined to abstain from a thing, are the more eagerly bent upon having it; and fret and fume with passion, or sit down to pout in obstinate sulkiness, because they cannot be indulged. You may have seen men too, who, when reproofed for drinking or swearing, will nobly show their independence and their disdain of interference and reproof, by drinking and swearing the more! The principle is the same.

“*For without the law sin was dead.*” It is a truth, that the power of sin to kill arises from the Law, for, as we have seen, without a law there could be no sin; and it is the Law which denounces death against its transgressors. But nothing can be more preposterous than to suppose the Apostle here to refer to the state of things before the Mosaic law, as if *then* there had been no sentence of death,—as if *then* there had been no law; and as if the Apostle in speaking of himself personified the Jewish nation before the giving of the Law, as

having been then *alive*, being free of any sentence of death, which the Law had not yet pronounced. Such views, gravely as they have been maintained, are too wild and extravagant to merit serious refutation. To say nothing of the absurdity of such a supposed personification, the doctrine that there was no sentence of death before the giving of the law by Moses is in the very teeth of the whole reasoning of the Apostle, respecting the condemnation of men on one common ground from the beginning.* He is here speaking of the effects of the Law on the present views and characters of men, in answer to the question—"Is the law sin?" The meaning may be illustrated from 1 Cor. xv. 56. "The strength of sin is the law." The law is the strength of sin, because it gives the knowledge of sin, and accompanies that knowledge with the denunciation of its own sanction. In proportion therefore to the knowledge of the Law will sin have power to disturb the sinner, to fill his conscience with alarm, and to slay his self-righteous confidence. When any one's conceptions of the Law in its purity and extent are low and inadequate—sin will be dead in his conscience:—he will see no danger, and feel no alarm, any more than one would be apprehensive of injury from the dead. Such would be the case *completely*, were there *no knowledge whatever* of the Law.

The idea conveyed by this clause—"without the law sin was dead"—is accordingly further brought out in verse ninth:—"For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The Apostle thus expresses the idea which a sinner entertains of his state while he is ignorant of the spirituality and extent of the Law; and the effect which a right view of it has in destroying his vain conceit of himself and all his hopes of life. "*Without the law*" signifies, while *in ignorance of the law*. But how could this be said of one who was "brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers." The solution is plain. However well versed in the letter of the Law, he was

* Chap. v. 12—14.

without any correct notions and impressions of its *spirit*. He went about to establish by it his own righteousness, never imagining that the very law in which he was trusting for life pronounced the whole tenor of his conduct sin, and laid him under a sentence of condemnation to death. *He was then alive, because sin was dead.* “But when the (or this) commandment came,” i. e. when he was given to see the spirituality of the precept “*Thou shalt not covet*,” and through that precept the spirituality of the Law in general, —sin, which before had been *dead*, giving him no trouble, never disturbing his confident assurance of life—sin revived —it *came to life*. A sense of guilt sprung up in his conscience; the Law, which had before appeared as his friend, he now saw to be his deadly and irreconcilable enemy, relentlessly condemning and giving him over to death. Thus his hopes from the Law were slain. He saw himself under a just sentence of condemnation—he “*died*.”*

Thus, according to verse tenth, “the commandment, which was ordained to life, he found to be unto death.” I doubt not that “*the commandment*” has still a special reference to the particular specified precept. *It*, like the rest of the Law, was ordained (or given) for life—or, simply, “*was unto life*”—i. e. by its original institution and proper tendency. This precept, it is true, never was *by itself* the condition of life: but, as *a part* of the whole law, it was given for the same purpose as the whole. The Law was given to be obeyed; and to perfect obedience it promised life. But to all transgressors it is *unto death*:—and, since all have sinned, it speaks nothing to any but death and damnation. It is all curse. This every sinner finds to be the case whenever he comes to understand it aright. Whatever may have been his conceptions of it and of himself before, he now sees it to be “*unto death*”—*death to himself*.

The Apostle had spoken of the “motions of sin being by the law;” and of sin “taking the advantage,” and “working in him covetous desire” by means of the very commandment

* This passage and Gal. ii. 19 mutually illustrate each other.

which prohibited covetousness. But such is the sanction of the Law, that a sinner could hardly indulge sin in the face of it, without practising some kind of *deception* upon himself: hence he adds—verse 11. “For sin, taking the advantage, deceived,” or seduced,* “me by this commandment; and by it too it slew me.” But although he particularizes this commandment, this is only as a specimen or exemplification of the same kind of deception as produced by the sinful principle in regard to *all* its precepts. And the heart being “deceitful above all things,” we may conceive of this deception as indicated in various ways. By the strictness of the law, for instance, corruption takes occasion to suggest its *unreasonable*ness, as prohibiting the indulgence of inclinations which nature would fondly gratify. This breeds hard thoughts of God. It is concluded that demands which are unreasonable we cannot be bound to obey: and so we are *seduced* or *enticed* to that which is evil.—This idea too of over-strictness, connected with a general vague notion of divine goodness, naturally deceives into the belief of the first lie—“Ye shall not surely die;” and so self-flattering hopes of life are kept up, and encouragement taken from them in the practice of sin.—The sinful principle, too, roused to action by its aversion to the purity and spirituality of the Law, paints its gratifications in the most alluring and seductive colours; enticing to indulgence like the harlot by her wiles; concealing behind the present pleasure the view of its future consequences; drawing a veil over the entrance to the chambers of death. At other times the sinner is led, by a perverse view of the strictness of the Law, and the seeming impossibility of succeeding in any attempts to keep it, to conclude that he can be little worse at any rate than he is, and that since the effort is hopeless to find life, he may just as well take his full enjoyment of sin’s pleasures; and he is thus tempted to run with wild and reckless precipitation in the ways of death. In these and other ways does sin make use of the law in deceiving and seducing the sinner to transgression.

* οὐκαπέτησε.

“And by the commandment too it *slays* him.” Paul was slain. All his lofty conceptions of himself as a meritorious possessor of life were laid in the grave, by the discovery of the spirituality of the Law. So must it be with every sinner when sin is brought home to his conscience by the light and authority and terror of that Law.

The Apostle having thus answered the objection in the seventh verse, draws his conclusion in the twelfth—“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” “*Holy*”—pure as God is pure in its nature, requiring and prohibiting in full consistency with the perfection of the moral nature of Deity. “*Just*”—its requirements being only what is due to God, and its threatenings what is due to transgressors, according to the principles of the most unimpeachable equity. “*Good*”—consistent with the benevolence as well as the holiness of the Lawgiver, eminently calculated to secure and promote the happiness of the obedient subject, commanding only what is really for his benefit, and forbidding only what is prejudicial to his best interests.

The same thing is affirmed specifically of “*the commandment*.” This, I have formerly said, I understand of the particular commandment by which the Apostle was taught the important general lesson of the spirituality of the Law. And the singling of it out in this verse may be considered as meaning that the Law *in its utmost spirituality* is “holy, and just, and good.” If any thing happens to be in a special manner the means of forcing upon our convictions a lesson which we do not relish and would fain resist, we are apt to feel a kind of indignant fretfulness and dislike to it. We have got the lesson against our will; we cannot gainsay it; but we would rather have remained in ignorance of it; and we cherish no good-will to the person or the circumstance whence the unwelcome truth has come. It was not thus with the Apostle. He had discovered the spirituality of the Law;—but, instead of now disdaining the lesson, he in the highest terms commends it; nay, commends the very precept from which the conviction had forced itself upon his mind.

He has now said enough, we should think, in vindication of the Law from the supposed imputation. But he is anxious that his meaning may not be misunderstood. He is jealous for the honour of the law, as involving in it the honour of the Lawgiver. Having spoken of the law being "*unto death*," and yet of its being "*holy, and just, and good*," he reconciles the seeming inconsistency by asking and answering another question which his statements might suggest:—

Verse 13. “Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.”—“*Was then that which is good made death unto me?*” or—“Did that which is good, then, become death unto me?”* Was good the cause of evil? Was the good law the cause of my death? Did it produce death to me or in me? “By no means,” he answers, “but *sin*.” It was not the Law; it was sin. The Law was the innocent occasion; sin was the guilty cause. Sin “wrought death in me *by* that which is good.” The Law was “ordained to life.” In its nature it was calculated to secure life, life spiritual and eternal.

But by means of that which is good sin “*wrought death* in him.”—It wrought death in a spiritual sense, by working in him, in the way already described, all covetous and other sinful desires: for these are spiritual death:—and it wrought eternal death, as a necessary consequence; the Law not itself exposing to it, for “the man that doeth shall live,”—but sin, as the transgression of the Law, laying the sinner under the sentence of death; and the sinful principle, influenced and excited by the prohibitions of the Law, leading on to greater degrees of trespass, and so increasing the intensity of the curse.

And when “sin thus appeared, working death in him by that which is good, sin by the commandment *became exceeding sinful*.” Nothing could more affectingly evince the evil of the sinful principle in the heart—the desperate virulence of its operations, than its taking occasion from that which

* τὸ οὐν ἀγαθὸν, ἵμοι γίγνεται πάντας;

was "*good*" to meditate and practise evil; so rendering that which "*was unto life*" productive of their aggravation of the sentence of death. "The law entered that the offence might abound." The divine purity of the commandments shows in deep and glaring colours the atrocity of their violation.—It is by a due apprehension of the purity, spirituality and extent of the Law, and also of its goodness, as indicative of the benevolence of the Lawgiver, that the exceeding sinfulness of sin is discovered to the spiritually enlightened mind; while the fearful sanction by which it is guarded shows in what a light the breach of it is viewed by its divine Author. Thus all the shame and all the wrong and evil lie at the door of SIN. The Law is not only vindicated from injurious reflection, but shown to be, like every thing else that comes from God, worthy of its divine Original.

LECTURE XXXII.

ROMANS VII. 14—25.

“ For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

I TRUST that in the following illustration of this passage, I shall succeed in convincing you that the repeated assertion of things being said in it which cannot be applied to any regenerate person, is without foundation; and, on the other hand, that there are things in it which cannot possibly be true of the unregenerate; and that the whole passage presents a most interesting exemplification of that conflict between the principles of two opposing natures which forms the essential distinction between the unsanctified and the sanctified.

1. Our first observation relates to *the change of tense* in the passage when compared with what precedes.*

* Verses 9—15. Of this change, this transition from past to pre-

It is alleged, in reply to this simple and seemingly conclusive circumstance, that the present tense is sometimes used for the past; and an instance is adduced from this Apostle's writings, and that, too, relative to himself:—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."* Here, it is said, the Apostle speaks of what he had been, referring to his past life, and yet he uses the present tense—"of whom I am chief." But the cases are not parallel. In the passage referred to, Paul is illustrating the freeness and the richness of the Lord's mercy in his own salvation. Now, when a man does this, he must of necessity take into his estimate the whole amount, the entire aggregate of evil from, or notwithstanding which, he has been saved. In this view, the proper meaning of the Apostle's declaration comes to be:—"Of all the sinners who have experienced the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ I am the chief." In such a case, the present time is perfectly natural, even although it be true that it is especially of what he *had* been that he speaks. This I do not deny. The context makes it evident.† But when a man has been speaking of the views which he once entertained, and which he had continued for a length of time to hold, respecting his own character and state, and in doing so, uses the past tense, and then makes a transition from the past to the present, it cannot but appear unnatural in a high degree to consider him as still meaning the past, and still continuing to speak of what he had formerly been. When the same man, in speaking of his own views and principles and character, says first *I was*, and then changes to *I am*, is it not reasonable to conceive that he is speaking of his former and his present self? Very strong grounds indeed would be requisite to warrant our understanding him in a sense different from that which is conveyed by the natural and obvious construction of his words.

The burden of the proof, as Professor Hodge justly observes, certainly lies with those who deny that the Apostle (though sent time, neither Tholuck nor Stuart takes any notice. Yet surely it is no unimportant item in the case.

* 1 Tim. i. 15.

† 1 Tim. i. 13, 16.

speaking throughout the passage in the present tense), actually means present time, or (though speaking throughout the passage of himself, "I," "I myself") really means himself; and who affirm that he refers to past time, or personates another. This is contrary to the Apostle's usage as it is contrary to all usage. And, therefore, I repeat, very strong grounds ought to be adduced in vindication of such a view before it can be entitled to adoption. Have sufficient grounds, then, been adduced?

Such a ground it would be, were it true which has been alleged (as by Tholuck, Stuart, and others), that the connexion imperatively requires it—that the application of the passage to the regenerate cannot be made compatible, on any fair and natural principles of exegesis, with the preceding and subsequent context. They affirm very decidedly that the latter part of chapter seventh is exegetical of the fifth verse of that chapter, and that the former part of chapter eighth, from verse first to verse seventeenth, is exegetical of the sixth. But this is by no means satisfactorily made out. And there is one consideration by which the conclusiveness of the position is quite invalidated, namely, that in order to establish the principle of such relation to the context, the justness of the exposition of the latter part of the seventh chapter must be *assumed*. The two verses and the two portions of the context are alleged to be respectively antithetical. But then their antithetical character depends entirely on the previous supposition of their being themselves correctly expounded. Now this is not fair. "A particular interpretation cannot first be assumed to make out the antithesis, and then the antithesis be assumed to justify the interpretation." And, moreover, it is very far from being clear that the interpretation, which makes the end of chapter seventh the language of the Apostle respecting himself at the time of his writing, is irrelevant to the subject he was discussing. So far from its being so, the ordinary interpretation sustains an interesting and beautiful relation to the Apostle's great general subject and design. I cannot state this better than in the words of Hodge:—"In the first five chapters he

shows that we are justified by faith without the works of the law; in the sixth, that this doctrine of gratuitous justification, instead of leading to licentiousness, presents the only certain and effectual means of sanctification. In the beginning of the seventh chapter, he shows that the believer is really thus free from the law and is now under grace; and that while under the law he brought forth fruit unto sin, but being under grace he now brings forth fruit unto God. The question here arises:—Why is the holy, just, and good law thus impotent? Is it because it is evil? Far from it; the reason lies in our own corruption. Then to show how this is, and why the objective and authoritative exhibition of truth cannot sanctify, the Apostle proceeds to show how it actually operates on the depraved mind. In the first place, it enlightens conscience; and in the second, it rouses the opposition of the corrupt heart. These are the two elements of the conviction of sin—a knowledge of its nature, and a sense of its power over ourselves. Hence the feeling of self-condemnation, of helplessness, and misery. Thus the Law slays. This is one portion of the effect, but not the whole; for even after the heart is renewed, as it is but imperfectly sanctified, the Law is still unable to promote holiness. Here, again, the reason is not that the Law is evil, but that we are carnal. Indwelling sin, as the Apostle calls it, is the cause why the Law cannot sanctify even the believer. It presents, indeed, the form of beauty, and the soul delights in it after the inward man; but the corrupt affections, which turn to self and the world, are still there; these the Law cannot destroy. But though the Law cannot do this, it shall eventually be done. Thanks to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

2. What Paul here says of himself has been thought decidedly inconsistent with the character of a regenerate person:—"I am carnal, sold under sin." Let us carefully examine this.

(1.) I have to remark—The necessity of a right understanding of the terms employed. With regard, for instance, to the designation "carnal," we are apt, inconsiderately, to conceive of it as importing the same thing with another

phrase of this Apostle, being “in the flesh.” But there is a material difference between them, as his own explanations evince. Being “in the flesh” denotes being absolutely unregenerate.* It is otherwise with the designation “carnal.” It admits of degrees, and is actually applied by Paul himself to regenerate persons, when acting too much under the influence of remaining corruption. Persons may be, in a certain degree and in certain respects, “carnal,” of whom it cannot with truth be said, that they are “in the flesh.”† Dr. Adam Clarke yet asserts that “the epithet carnal, which is the characteristic designation of an unregenerate man, cannot be applied to St. Paul after his conversion, nor, indeed, to any Christian in that state.” To every assertion that it cannot be so applied, it is surely a sufficient answer that Paul himself does so apply it. It is said:—“They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh.”‡ This does not mean that the flesh is completely dead, its power entirely destroyed; but only that its dominion is destroyed, and that, in the spiritual resolution of the new man, it is doomed to final destruction. It is obvious, then, that a man who is spiritual may yet feel and bewail the power of corrupt affections and desires, that is, of remaining carnality. And in proportion to the degree of his real spirituality will be the degree in which he feels this carnality, and the strength of the terms in which he expresses his sense of it, just as in proportion to a man’s humility will be the strength of the terms of self-abasement he will employ.§

An expression till stronger follows:—“*Sold under sin.*” The expression, we grant, is very strong. And why is it strong? Because it is the utterance of strong emotion. In evidence that it could not be used by a regenerate man, a passage has been quoted as an alleged parallel.|| But where is the parallelism? It can only be produced by the most extraordinary confounding of things essentially different. Is there any parallelism between its being recorded respecting a man in a historical document that he “sold himself to work

* Rom. viii. 8, 9. † 1 Cor. iii. 1—3; i. 2; Matt. xvi. 17, 23.
 ‡ Gal. v. 24. § Eph. iii. 8. || 1 Kings xxi. 25; 2 Kings xvii. 17.

wickedness," being the voluntary slave of his lusts, giving himself up to their unbridled sway, and a person saying of himself in the language (as that before us manifestly is) of bitter complaint and heartfelt regret:—"I am carnal, sold under sin?" In the very terms, there is an allusion to a bondsman, not to one who has sold himself, and so reduced himself to voluntary servitude, but to one who has been sold, and is retained in bondage against his inclination; and the allusion intimates that the service which the Apostle rendered to sin was opposite to the prevailing bent and tendency of his will. Suppose, we had been informed, by the historian, of Ahab's bemoaning himself for his carnality, complaining of the power of sin over him, how different would the impression of his character have been upon our minds! The stronger his expressions, the impression would have been proportionally the more favourable; the more spiritually minded we should have conceived him to be.

(2.) Notice the standard by which the writer judges of himself:—"The law is spiritual." "*Spiritual*," as contrasted with "*carnal*," evidently signifies not only its reaching to the inward thoughts, affections, and desires; but its perfection of accordance in all that it requires, both inwardly and outwardly, with the character and mind of God's Spirit, as opposite to the moral corruption of man's fallen nature, called "the flesh." It is when he compares his heart and conduct with the pure and heart-searching law of the holy God that he uses these terms of self-accusation and complaint. The perfect moral purity of the Law arises from the perfect moral purity of the Lawgiver. It is the image of God. It necessarily reaches to the principles of conduct, approving no actions but such as come from a spring of untainted purity within; from a heart perfectly right with God, and condemning as sin everything inward or outward that comes not up to that holy requirement, the first in the Law, and the sum of all that is spiritual:—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." Such was the test to which the writer of these words brought himself. Such the glass in which he viewed himself. By this

he examined his mind, and heart, and life; a mirror that showed him every defect, every distortion, and every speck of defilement in his moral image, in its true light. It was in the spotless purity of the divine law that he contemplated his own sinfulness. Now, everything in regard to the view we take of ourselves, and in regard consequently to our feelings and language respecting ourselves, must depend on the nature of the test by which we try our characters—on the light in which we place them for observation and scrutiny. A correct view of the infinite disproportion between any measure of holiness to which the believer can here attain and the character and law of the Holy One, will cause every one who obtains it both to feel and to speak strongly; in terms of which the meaning is to be interpreted, not by the rule and compass of a cold imperturbable criticism, but by the laws of our nature that dictate the utterance of powerful feeling. They who try themselves by human laws and human opinions, and by human flatteries and self-delusions; they who “measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves,” may be very lightly affected by the evil that is in them. But he who views himself in the glass of that law which requires, in every thought and word and deed, sinless conformity with the fundamental principle of supreme and incorruptible love to God, will see, in the sadly humbling deficiencies of which he cannot fail to be sensible, more and more reason for the language of the deepest self-abasement. Feeling that there is no one thing in his character that will fully bear the application of this lofty but righteous standard, and that “in many things he offends,” he will lay his hand on his mouth, and his mouth in the dust, and cry, “unclean, unclean.” The view of the Law will produce the same effect on the mind as the view of the Law-giver. And of this we have several recorded exemplifications; to which the very same objection might be made, were we to proceed on the principle of strictly literal interpretation, which takes the Apostle’s language here as *bona fide* his own.*

* Isa. vi. 1—5; Job xl. 3—5; xlvi. 1—6.

(3.) These very expressions, which have been conceived to be the most decisive against the passage being applicable to a regenerate person, appear to be utterly irreconcilable with the hypothesis of the speaker being unregenerate. An unregenerate man may, by the power of conscience, be brought under strong convictions of sin, but the grounds of his distress are not to be found in the sin itself, but only in the consequences to which it exposes him. His distress is mere alarm. We never expect to hear an unrenewed man bewailing his carnality and opposition to the divine law, as, through the whole of the passage before us, this writer does. But, on the other hand, the more truly holy a person becomes—the more spiritual in mind and affections, the stronger will be his impressions of the evil of sin, and of his own sin, and of the extent of his disconformity to the character and law of God. Were it supposable that a sinful thought should rise in the bosom of an angel of light, while otherwise he retained all the uncorrupted purity of his nature, what unutterable anguish of spirit and self-detestation would the consciousness of it awaken there! Thus the holier any man becomes, the more should we be led astray, were we to form our estimate of his character by the literal interpretation of his language concerning himself. Who, indeed, ever thinks of interpreting with the precision which pertains to geometry, to criticism, or to history, the language which gives utterance to powerful feeling? It would be out of nature.

3. Let us now attend to the manner in which the carnality of the writer or speaker was manifested to himself: "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me"*

* Verses 15, 18, 19, 21

On these verses, let the following remarks be duly considered:—

(1.) Although terms are used in them which strictly relate to outward conduct, such as “*do*,” “*perform*,” &c., yet, since the writer speaks of the Law as “spiritual,” he must be understood to mean transgression of the Law in general, transgression of all descriptions. The “*law is spiritual*,” and when evil thoughts and desires find place in the mind and heart, sin is committed, evil is done; for the law is violated, sin being “*transgression of law*.” Such is the view given of the law in verses seventh and eighth. On the same principle, when this Apostle speaks elsewhere of the “*works of the flesh*,” he includes under the designation various evil affections and passions of the mind.*

(2.) It has been alleged that the terms cannot describe the experience of a regenerate man, because they speak of a will to do good which has not effect in action. In answer, it is admitted, that all the evil which a man does, he must, of course, do with the consent of his will at the time. This is plain. The consent of the will is essential to the very nature of moral evil. It is impossible, therefore, that the Apostle should mean, that the particular evil actions which he did were done against his will, while in actual exercise respecting those actions at the instant of their being performed. This were a contradiction; as if he hated and were averse to them at the very moment of doing them, and did them with this aversion to them in his will. It is unfair to impute to him a meaning that is in itself contradictory. His meaning seems evidently to be, that the particular actions were contrary to his general and predominating inclination; that the evils into which he was drawn by the power of remaining corruption were in opposition, not to the particular volition necessarily connected with the doing of them (which is a sheer absurdity), but to the habitual bent of his will, to the abiding and prevalent desires of his new nature. This appears on the face of the passage. His will

* Gal. v. 19—21.

must have been to do the evil he actually did. And yet it is worthy of notice, that he never speaks of his willing evil, but repeatedly of his not willing it, of his hating it, and several times of his willing good. This must surely intimate that the bias of his will was to good; and that when he did evil it turned aside from its ordinary course. If it means not this, what does it, what can it mean? And does not this, then, suit the character of regenerate man? I need not answer the question.

(3.) The distinction which has just been mentioned between the will in the particular evil action and the will in its general predominant bent or inclination, appears to be the only simple and consistent principle of explanation for the various expressions in the passage. Thus, in verse fifteenth, “That which I do I allow not” (Greek, “I know not”*):—The verb to know is sometimes used with the idea of having satisfaction or complacency in a thing.† That our translators so understood it here, their very rendering of it by the appropriate term “allow” sufficiently shows. And it stands in contrast, not with being ignorant, but with “hating,” which clearly shows the sense in which the writer used it. The meaning, however, is not—the particular act of evil which I do, I allow not; for it is by a blinded and perverted judgment presenting sin to the mind at the time as a good, as something on some account or other desirable, that the will to sin is generated. But he did not allow sin in the prevailing temper or inclination of his heart. So of the other phrases:—“What I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that do I;” they are not, I repeat, to be interpreted of the state of his heart and will towards the particular evils at the instant of performing them, but of good and evil generally. His prevailing will was, to be conformed in all things to the will of God; and in the habitual state of his heart he hated whatever was opposed to it. But, through the power of the flesh, he too often “left undone things which he ought to have done, and did things which he ought not

* εἰδούσας.

† Psa. i. 6; Matt. vii. 23; Psa. xxxi. 7.

to have done." The influence of temptation bent his will to evil, when it was previously, and in the usual habit of it, set upon good. How often may it happen, that, when our will is determined upon good, a temptation comes in the way, and overcoming the determination, turns it aside to evil; then, "the good which we would, we do not, and the evil which we would not, that we do."

(4.) It may be further observed, that the terms used by the Apostle not only imply the consciousness of occasional sin, but of universal failure. This is the case in verse eighteenth,—"For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." This might be interpreted on the same general principle. But taken in connexion with the spirituality of the law, it goes a step further,—"To will was present with him." This will was, to be in everything—in spirit and principle, fully conformed to the pure requirements of the heart-searching law. But in this view "how to perform" at all "that which was good," *i. e.* good, as being perfectly up to the spiritual requisitions of the law, "he found not." It was "high, he could not attain unto it." Judging thus, he was feelingly conscious that in everything he failed.

In the high sense of holy spirituality just mentioned, he found "evil," always and in everything, "present with him."* This expresses likewise the contest, to be noticed, by and by, between the spirit and the flesh. However strong and steady his habitual inclination to good, the opposing evil was still present with him, eagerly demanding the preference, and ready at times to gain the victory.

The Apostle found this "*a law*," that is, as we may see more fully on the latter verses of the chapter, a principle in his constitution as a regenerate man, a principle of incessant operation. And the words, as thus explained, every believer may with perfect truth adopt. They express a part of the experience of all the children of God.

(5.) The whole of this view is strongly supported by the

* Ver. 21.

mode of expression used, when the Apostle assigns the reason for the fact, that “the good which he would he did not,”* while “the evil which he would not that he did,” namely, “For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” Observe the distinction—“*in me* that is, *in my flesh*.” This seems to me a clear proof that the speaker is a regenerate person. The unregenerate are altogether “carnal;” they are “*in the flesh*.”† But the writer here distinguishes between his flesh and something else in him that was *not* flesh—something that was spiritual; that is, he distinguishes between the old man and the new, between himself as “born after the flesh,” and himself as born “after the Spirit.” The reason why he “could not do that which he would” sometimes at all, and always in the degree and manner he desired, was the opposition of this flesh, wholly corrupt as it was, to the will of the Spirit.‡

(6.) It is of special consequence to the right understanding of this part of the statement, and indeed of the whole passage, to distinguish between the operation of judgment and conscience, and the exercise of the will, and desires and affec-

* Ver. 18.

† Chap. viii. 5—9; John iii. 6.

‡ Moses Stuart’s comment on this verse appears to me very strange, and indeed self-contradictory. “For I know,” &c., *γὰς, explicantis*; for the present verse is designed to explain the preceding one. There the apostle had said:—“It is sin which dwelleth in me.” But what is meant by ‘me?’ The answer in verse 18 is:—The carnal man. To say that ‘sin dwells in me,’ and to say that no good thing ‘dwells in my flesh,’ is one and the same thing here.” Nothing can well be more preposterous. By the carnal man Stuart means the evil nature, as distinguished from the good, in the same person. When that person says:—“Sin that dwelleth in me,” he is to be considered, Stuart says, as speaking in the one of these natures—as the carnal man. But the carnal man as distinguished from the spiritual, is of course the same with “the flesh” as distinguished from the spirit. If “*in me*,” therefore, means in me the carnal man, it means the same thing as “*in the flesh*.” And to what is the 18th verse thus reduced? To the truism, “In my flesh; that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing?” Does not the expression “*my flesh*” show that it is not the flesh or carnal man that speaks, but the PERSON to whom the flesh or carnal nature pertained along with another and a better? We might push the absurdity still further, but it is unnecessary. We may have to revert to the same inconsistency in regard to the other, or spiritual nature, hereafter.

tions.* The will chooses that which at the time appears good. The appearance may be deceitful, but there can be no choice without it. When sin is committed, it is from some false and imposing representation of it to the mind by the evil heart, which induces the choice of it for the sake of present gratification, throwing into doubt or into distance the ultimate consequences. But if the will and the affections prevailingly and habitually incline to the law of God; so as that, when the person does evil, it can be truly said of him that he does what, in the prevailing and habitual bias of his heart, he "would not;" such a person honours that law by regarding and loving it as good.†

Consent and *assent* differ. The one relates to the will and affections, the other to the understanding; the one has respect to the goodness of the object, the other simply to truth.

Here, if I do not greatly mistake, lies one of the leading inadvertencies of those who explain the passage of the unregenerate man. They speak of reason and conscience, when the Apostle speaks of the will and affections. They speak of the approbation of the judgment, when he speaks of the desire and delight of the heart. "That I would not," "that I hate," they interpret as of the same import with—what my reason approves not. And that "I would," that I "consent unto," that "I delight in," as meaning—what my reason and conscience approve and regard as right. But these are two very different things. An unregenerate man may, in his judgment, perceive much excellence in the divine law, and his conscience may remonstrate with him on his secret, and even acknowledged, convictions of its rectitude; while his will and affections are so far from being bent on good, that they are uniformly set upon its opposite, which, instead of hating, he loves and pursues.

The passage, therefore, in the heathen poet Ovid, so often quoted as of parallel import with that of Paul, is very far indeed from being so—

* Ver. 16.

† Ibid.

“ My reason this, my passion that persuades,
I see the right, and I approve it too,
Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.”*

Surely no one will be so unreasonable as to say that the remonstrances of conscience in a wicked man, which the

* “ — aliudque cupido
Mens aliud suadet. Video meliora, proboque,
Deteriora sequor — ”

For other quotations of a similar nature, see Wetstein’s Greek Testament on the verse; also Tholuck on the passage, from whom, too, they are quoted by Stuart. A similar remark applies to them generally. This confounding of reason and conscience with will and affection runs through the entire comments both of Tholuck and Stuart. As a specimen of the effect this has in obliging them to reduce and qualify the obvious import of the simplest terms, take the following from Stuart. It relates to the word *μισῶ*, which the writer of the Epistle uses in application to evil, verse 15,—“ For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I HATE, that do I.” “ It is not true, indeed, that a man does what on the whole he is unwilling to do; nor is this what the Apostle means to affirm. But it is true that men often do what reason and conscience disapprove, and which he here expresses in the strong language of *οὐ θέλω* and *μισῶ*; *i. e.*, it is the *τον ἐνθεωρος* of whom this is predicated. And even this, in a contrast like the present, is not to be urged to its highest point of possible meaning. Thus, for example, *μισῶ* does not always mean positive hatred, but a not loving, or merely a comparatively not loving, *i. e.* a less loving, for so the examples in Matth. vi. 24, Luke xvi. 13, Luke xiv. 26, teach us. The last example here is perfectly in point, to show that *μισῶ* may mean, as it certainly does here, merely a less loving of some than others; compare as exegetical of it, Matt. x. 37. That *θέλω* and *μισῶ*, then, can both be affirmed of the conscience enlightened by the divine law (compare verse 9), when they are understood in this qualified sense (and a qualified sense, on any ground of exegesis, is absolutely necessary), is sufficiently manifest. Any one who undertakes to urge the sense of words, employed in such a contrast as is here presented, to the highest meaning of which they are capable, must involve himself in difficulties that are absolutely inextricable.”—p. 295.

What Stuart here says of “ a qualified sense being, on any principle of exegesis, absolutely necessary,” we shall have occasion to notice by and by. What I wish you now to observe is, the sense which he is obliged to put upon the word “ I hate” in the passage before us, in order to render the use of it at all compatible with the character of an unregenerate man. It would not do, he was sensible, to make the inspired Apostle represent such a man as absolutely hating evil. He seeks to make it out, therefore, that the verb for hating means sometimes a less degree of loving. Now, without entering into the criti-

most abandoned sometimes experience, and that powerfully, amount to anything like hatred of evil or delight in good.

(7.) Even what is said in the passage of willing that which is good, when applied to an unregenerate man, makes it no

cism, which is quite needless, it is enough to ask whether, when the words are considered as belonging to the unregenerate, the case is materially mended. How would the Apostle have relished the interpretation of his words, according to which he is made to represent the unrenewed man as only loving evil less than he loves good; to represent that very "carnal mind" which he pronounces "enmity against God," not, indeed, as absolutely hating evil, that might be rather more than enough to say in its behalf, but only as not loving it so well as he loves the good? Is this the true state of things with the unregenerate? You will have perceived, in the very quotation, an example of the manner in which he confounds hatred with the disapproval of reason and conscience. You cannot but perceive the want of parallelism between the cases quoted in support of the reduced and qualified sense of the word *μισῶ*, and that which he seeks to identify with them. In Matt. vi. 24 and Luke xvi. 13 (which are the same), there is no propriety in the deduced sense at all. Masters are spoken of whose characters and whose demands are opposite, and whose services are incompatible; who cannot both be loved, unless it is possible for the same heart to love opposites: but just in proportion as the one is loved, the other, being its opposite, must be not merely loved less, but positively disliked. And in regard to Luke xiv. 26, while it is admitted that Matt. x. 37 is the true key to its meaning, the cases are, in a very important respect, widely dissimilar. In the case of father and mother, and wife and children, they are objects which the law of God commands us to love—the law of nature and the law of revelation alike. And therefore we are quite prepared for the interpretation of hating as no more than a strong expression of the sentiment that the affection dutifully felt towards them, must never be allowed to compete with the love due to Him; that when the claims of the two came into collision, they who loved him should act as if they hated them, and incur (as they many a time have done), the charge of hating them, rather than violate the claims of their love to Him for what He is, and for what He hath done. But is evil, moral evil, sin, a thing which we are commanded to love? And is there, therefore, in the application of the word *μισῶ* to it, any similar ground on which we should be prepared to find it bearing only the qualified sense of loving less than some other object that competes with it in our affections, and is entitled to a higher degree of our love? Assuredly it is no part of the unregenerate man's character, according to the Scriptures, that he "hates evil." This is necessarily felt by those who interpret the passage in application to such. And to clear away the difficulty, Stuart, like others, is driven to two resources, both of which alike are arbitrary and unnatural:—the first to make hating mean only loving less; and the second, to make hating, or loving less,

easy matter to discern the difference between such a man and the regenerate. Wherein does it lie? According to some of our opponents, it lies in the circumstance, that in the case of the latter there is not the will only, but the performance; in the former, there is the will without the ability to perform, the will proving abortive. In support of this most extraordinary distinction, appeal is made to Phil. ii. 12, 13. But surely a more unfortunate passage for their purpose could not well have been thought of; for it clearly represents God as working in us to *will* as well as to *do*, the willing and the doing being alike the product of divine influence. How vain, then, to speak of the will to do good being in the unregenerate without the power! The metaphysics and the theology of such a statement are alike confused. Alas! what is the want of ability in a depraved creature but the want of *will*—the alienation of the heart from God and goodness? “In the flesh there dwelleth no good,”—no principle that could ever lead to any degree whatever of true goodness. The will without the ability would clear the creature of moral blame.

4. The next thing that demands our attention is, the inference drawn from the matter of fact already considered. “*Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*”*

The very sound of these words, when taken out of their connexion, by which alone their true meaning can be ascertained, exposes them to misrepresentation and abuse; and abused they have been, both by the levity of profane folly and the sarcastic wit of infidelity. Nothing, therefore, can be of greater consequence than to rescue them from such abuse, by a correct attention to their connexion. We shall, by this means, both avoid their misapplication, and derive from them the profit which, when rightly understood, they

identical in meaning with the approving dictates of judgment or conscience; thus identifying the affections with the intellect, the love and hatred of the heart with the mere approving or disapproving decisions of the moral sense. But this is, if ever anything was, to “confound things which differ.”

* Verse 17.

are, in common with the whole passage, fitted to impart. Observe, then:—

(1.) We are accustomed to form, and there is no other principle on which we can form, our estimate of a man's character, from its distinguishing and predominant principles. If a person, for example, noted for his benevolence, does, at a time, an ungenerous deed; we say he did not act like himself. Nay, we even express ourselves more strongly and more in congruity with the terms of this passage; we say:—"He was not himself when he did that." When such language is used as in 2 Cor. v. 17, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," it does not mean that sin has in the new creature ceased to exist, but only that it has ceased to reign, or to have the ascendancy. What may be termed the substance of his character is changed. Its ruling principles are new. His nature before was all evil. Now he possesses two natures, of which the decidedly prevailing or reigning one is the new or good nature; and the effects of the remaining old nature are no longer such as to form the character of the man, or to dominate, as it were, the person's self. This agrees precisely with what the writer says of himself.* The principle here is, that the habitual state and tendency of the will and affections are what properly constitute the characters of men. It is on this principle that he draws the inference:—"It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." The very mode of expression evinces the justness of the observation.†

* Verses 15, 16.

† I have before shown the incongruity of Stuart's interpretation of the "ME" in the close of verse 17. "Sin that dwelleth IN ME." By "me" he understands the carnal man, that is, the one of the two opposite natures or principles thus personified; instead of understanding it of the person himself, in whom these opposite natures dwelt and wrought, as that person himself manifestly explains it in the beginning of verse 18:—"For in me, that is, in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing."

The same remark that was made on his exposition of these words falls to be repeated now in regard to his interpretation of the personal pronoun, when the other nature of the complex man is spoken of, as in the same 17th verse:—"Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." "'Eγώ is, therefore, the moral self, the νοῦς

Nothing can be clearer than that the personal pronoun, the “I,” cannot, in both its occurrences in the statement, be literally and strictly understood; for this plain reason, that so to understand it is a flat and palpable contradiction in terms, for the person cannot both do and not do the same thing. Yet he says:—“If I do that which I would not,” implying his being the agent, “it is no more I that do it,” equally implying his not being the agent. The question, therefore, is:—On what principle is this to be explained? And I confess myself incapable of imagining any other than that which has been mentioned, namely, that the “I” in the second of its occurrences has reference to the agent’s distinguishing character—that from which he is known and designated. In the first occurrence it means simply the agent, the person as the doer of the action; in the second, it means the same person indeed, but the person considered characteristically, as distinguished by the possession and influence of certain principles and dispositions. In this instance they are the principles and disposition which constitute the saint, the “new creature.” It is manifest that, in the man who here records his experience, sin is not the prevailing or reigning power. “Sin,” or “the flesh,” he regards as an enemy, whose power, so far from willingly yielding to it, he habitu-

or *τοις ἀνθρώποις* here, while *ἡ ἀμαρτία* (here personified), means the sinful passions and affections of men.”—Exegesis, p. 297. Now, if *I* here means “the higher moral self of reason and conscience, as distinguished from the lower one of carnal passions and appetites,” then “ME,” in the end of the verse, should mean the same, the speaker being unchanged. “It is no more *I* that do it, but sin who dwelleth IN ME.” But we have seen that by me, in the end of the verse, he understands the carnal man. What confusion is thus produced! We have three persons, “I” meaning “the higher self of reason and conscience,” “Me,” (though without any notice of change), the very opposite, “the lower self of carnal passions and appetites, and ‘sin,’ a personification of the sinful passions and affections of men;” and therefore, *alter et idem*, another and the same with the preceding, and yet represented as dwelling in the preceding. But if by the pronouns *I* and *me*, the person’s self who writes is understood, only speaking of himself under different aspects, all is sufficiently plain. And to this Stuart himself is obliged to come in the end on verse 25:—“So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin,” he explains: “I, the same person, have two minds or inclinations in me.”

ally resisted. This is surely the direct opposite of the character of an unregenerate man.

But here, again, we are in direct antipodes to Stuart. So far is he from regarding the writer or speaker as one whose character is, in prevailing principle and practice, good, that he represents him as precisely the reverse:—"The writer evidently means to say" (he is expounding the words "for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not"), "that the carnal part is altogether the predominant self, just in the same manner as he says:—'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them.' So, again:—'The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.'"^{*} Again:—"While Christians have many a conflict in which they are overcome by sin, yet they must be victors in far the greater number of cases, if the whole be collectively taken. If this be not true, then is it not true that 'he who loves God keeps His commandments;' it cannot be true that 'they who love the law of God do no iniquity;' nor true that 'he who is born of God sinneth not;' nor that faith enables him who cherishes it to 'overcome the world.' As, however, there is no denying the truth of these and the like declarations, and no receding from them nor explaining them away as meaning less than habitual victory over sin, so it follows, that when verses 14—25 are applied to Christian experience, they are wrongly applied. The person represented in these verses succumbs to sin in every instance of contest. The Christian must not, cannot, does not, so fight against sin. To assert this would be to contradict the whole tenor of the Scriptures; it would be abrogating at once all which is declared, in so pointed a manner, in ch. viii. 1—17."[†] But assuredly there is no foundation in the passage for such a statement as that which thus, with emphasis and doubled emphasis, he gives. And it is rather inconsistent that a commentator, dealing so freely with other phrases in the passage in the way of qualification

* Comm. p. 297.

† Excursus, p. 540.

and reduction, should apply so rigid and stringent a principle of interpretation here. “If, indeed, it were true,” says Professor Hodge, “that the person here described ‘succumbs to sin IN EVERY INSTANCE of contest,’ the description would be inapplicable, not to the Christian only, but to any other than the most immoral of men. It is rare indeed, even in the natural conflict between reason and passion, or conscience and corrupt inclination, that the better principle does not succeed, not once merely, but often.”*

But the writer says no such thing. It was utterly impossible that he should. On the same principle of interpretation, he must be understood as always willing and desiring good, and always (not willing or desiring but) hating evil. And how are we to imagine such a character? a man in every instance willing and desiring good, and in no one instance ever doing it—in every instance hating evil, and yet in no one instance ever failing to do it? This were an anomaly in the moral world, indeed; a character incapable of subsistence; an imaginary being, even beyond imagination! The writer speaks not of what was invariably the case, but of what he felt to be of too frequent occurrence. Were we to adopt such a principle of interpretation, we might contend that the heathen are represented by the Apostle as doing all that the law of God requires. “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.”† “*The things of the law*”‡ is a phrase capable of the most comprehensive meaning. But it is evident that Paul refers to no more than the occasional conformity to the dictates of the Law which is to be found everywhere, and the remonstrances of conscience against the contrary; as appears, indeed, from the very next verse. And yet it does not appear more clearly than it does here, that the man of two natures who here speaks does not represent himself as invariably in every instance succumbing to the dictates of the bad, always doing evil when evil competed with good.

* Comm. p. 299.

† Rom. ii. 14.

‡ τὰ τοῦ νόμου.

It is further manifest that the inference in verse seventeen is not derived by him from the mere dictates of reason and conscience, but from the predominant state of his will and affections. He does not say:—If I do that which my reason approves not; but, “If I do that I would not.” *Conscience* and *will* are not the same.

To no candid mind can it be necessary to observe, that these expressions of the Apostle:—“It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me,” are not designed in any way to palliate his sins. That man’s own heart must be sadly on the side of sin who can think or say so. The supposition is at variance with his whole character as apparent in his writings, and at variance with the very letter of his expressions in this passage itself. This surely is not the language of one who would excuse or palliate sin. They who would palliate sin do it from love to sin, from insensibility to its exceeding sinfulness, and with the smile of indifference and playfulness on their lips. By such is sin ever felt as a load from which they wish and long to be free? By some, it is admitted, the passage has been abused; they have taken encouragement from it in sin, and flattered themselves, or affected to flatter themselves, that their case was like the Apostle’s. But what is there which the man, whose heart is in love with sin, may not make a refuge to his deluded conscience. The mercy of a long-suffering God, the grace of the Gospel, the promises of forgiveness to those who at any time repent and believe the Gospel, have all been abused in a similar way. We may surely know enough of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the human heart to prevent our being greatly startled at any truth, merely on account of the perversion and abuse of it by ungodly men. The language is altogether incapable of application to the unrenewed. That man is in an unrenewed state who thus abuses it; and who flatters himself with the vain imagination, that because his reason and conscience disapprove and remonstrate, there is something in his case good, and encouraging, and analogous to the Apostle’s own experience, while his heart is in love with sinful indulgence.

But although the expressions are not used for the palliation of his sins, they are certainly used for some end. It was not to give him comfort in sin. Yet it is equally clear, that some kind of comfort or satisfaction he did find in the consideration mentioned. What then was it? It was this; that while he continued striving against sin, consciously setting himself in opposition to the power of the old man, "making no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof;" however he might "groan, being burdened with" a sense of remaining corruption, the consciousness of this remaining corruption was no reason for despair or despondency. The influence of the Gospel in producing holiness is, indeed, the grand evidence of a sinner's having believed it and having come under its power; and consequently of his being a genuine partaker of its other blessings and an heir of its hopes. But this influence is not perfect here; it does not root out the principles of corruption. These still remain, and exert a power in opposition to the principles of grace. And although these principles of grace must be so extensive and decided in their predominance as to form the character; yet were we to judge of our state merely from our being conscious of evil remaining in us, there would be no such thing as good hope in the world, nothing on earth but despair, for "there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." That there is a scriptural confidence arising from the consciousness of the predominant power of the truth in the soul, even notwithstanding the sensibility to remaining corruption, which is in fact a part of that very consciousness, is clear from many passages in the word of God.*

It ought further to be remarked, that this part of the Apostle's experience is by no means fitted to cherish any delusive confidence in our spiritual state while we are living in sin, or have it lying lightly on our conscience. The man who professes to believe the Gospel, most miserably perverts and most foully and profanely dishonours and slanders it, when he indulges the imagination that, whatever sins he

* 1 John i. 5—7; iii. 7—10, 19—21.

commits, he ought never to have his confidence towards God shaken or impaired. This awful doctrine has been held by some, under pretext of doing honour to the grace of God; as if all doubts on this point were indications of our resting our hopes on something else than the divine righteousness revealed in the Gospel. But such a doctrine is indeed betraying "the Son of man with a kiss." If there be any one lesson clearly taught by the precepts and examples of the word of God, it is this, that confidence towards Him, when deliberate sin has been committed and is lying upon the conscience, unrepented of, is the most preposterous and daring presumption. The truth of the divine testimony, and the reality of any sinner's interest in the provisions and blessings which that testimony reveals, or, in other words, of any sinner's faith in that testimony, are two distinct things, which must be ascertained by distinct evidences. The one stands sure, independently of the other. Yet such men, as I now refer to, buoy themselves up by such language as that before us. When believers transgress, they say:—"It is not they that do it, but sin that dwells in them; and that they ought not therefore to be discouraged by any evils whatever into which they may have been led astray." And was the language of this "holy man of God" thus designed to flatter professors and to give them ease in their trespasses? How indignantly would he have subjoined to every such inference from the terms in which he here expresses himself, his solemn "God forbid." The sins of believers, in proportion as their knowledge of God and of His law, and of His Gospel is superior, as well as their experience of His love and their obligations to His grace, have in them a deeper guilt, a heavier aggravation than the sins of other men. It is true, and it is a blessed truth, that the fountain of divine forgiveness is always open and always accessible. But it is fearful to think that on this account, because the blood of Jesus never loses its virtue, because the Lord is always gracious and ready to forgive, we should, when sin has been committed by us, take it easy, lay it little to heart, and be as happy and as comfortable as before. There is something in this so

unreasonable, so contrary to every dictate of common sense, as well as to the entire tenor of the Bible, that it is difficult to persuade one's self that it would ever be held. No, my brethren, when we have sinned, our return must be characterised by the deepest self-abasement and godly sorrow. Thus it was with David.* The divinely prescribed terms of a sinner's return are in the same strain:—"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips."†

* Psalm li. 1, &c.

† Hos. xiv. 1, 2.

LECTURE XXXIII



ROMANS VII. 14—25.

(SECOND DISCOURSE.)

5. LET us now see what the Apostle further says of himself. I had occasion to notice that the word “*law*”* is here used to signify a principle of uniform operation, whether good or evil in its tendency. It is used in reference to both, in what immediately follows:—verses 22, 23. “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

In these verses “*the inward man*” must signify something more than the soul, as distinguished from the body; for surely the “*law* that when he would do good evil was present with him,” was, in this sense of the phrase, in his “*inward man*” as well as the other law which he opposes to it,—as well as his “*delight in the law of God*.” They were both, in this respect, in his mind. The body cannot be the seat of any moral principle. It is of little moment in what senses some heathen writers may have used similar phrases. The question is:—In what sense does this same writer use the one before us? “*That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man:*”—“*Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*”† In

* Verse 21.

† Eph. iii. 16; 2 Cor. iv. 16.

the former of these passages, the prayer is not merely that the powers of their minds, possessed by them in common with other men, might be strengthened. It is a prayer for spiritual strength, that is, for the establishment and invigoration of the principles of “the new man;” which is a phrase of the same import. In the latter, if “the inward man” signified simply the mind, as usually opposed to the body, the case described would not be by any means a common, but rather a very extraordinary one; namely, that the mental faculties increased in vigour, as the bodily powers decayed. The influence of the afflictions of life, as stated in verse seventeenth, shows the meaning; for that influence certainly is not the mere strengthening of the powers of the mind, but evidently the strengthening of the spiritual principles and affections of the divine life in the soul of “the new man.” It is in the same sense that the phrase is used here. And this accords well with the statement in verse twenty-second:—“I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” The soul, as renewed by the Spirit, (which is the same thing as “the new man”), is the only seat of such “delight.” And surely this delight should settle the question, whether a regenerate man be the speaker. Who but a regenerate man can say this with truth?

The phrase has been paraphrased by—“*I esteem, and in my reason I approve.*” But this only confirms the truth of a former observation, namely, that those who conceive an unregenerate man to be the speaker, confound reason and conscience with the will and the affections. Certainly the two modes of expression are far from being equivalent. The original word strongly expresses pleasure of heart, and is properly rendered “*delight.*” And this is a most decided characteristic of the good or renewed man.* He delighted in the contemplation of it as an exhibition of the divine character; and in conformity to it as his honour and his happiness. Perfect conformity to it was the desire of his heart. Now it is quite clear that no sinner but one who

* Psalm i. 2; cxix. 16, 33, 47, 97, &c.

has been renewed in the spirit of his mind can have this delight. And it is equally clear, that no one who has been so renewed can be without it.

I have represented it as "quite clear" that no unregenerate man can thus "delight in the law of the Lord." Not so, however, thinks Dr. A. Clark:—"If it be said," (such is his extraordinary language,) "that it is impossible for an unregenerate man to delight in the law of God, the experience of millions contradicts the assertion. Every true penitent admires the moral law, longs most earnestly for a conformity to it, and feels that he never can be satisfied till he wakes up after his divine likeness; and he hates himself because he feels that he has broken it, and that his evil passions are still in a state of hostility to it." Strange reasoning certainly! The problem was to show "that an unregenerate man may delight in the law of God;" and the proof is, that every *true penitent* does! This is an easy way of getting witnesses by "millions." We must have better evidence from the phraseology of Scripture, however, before we can admit the identity of the unregenerate man and the "true penitent;" an identity which, according to the citation just made, enables Dr. Clark to put into the lips of the unregenerate, not only the terms here used by Paul, but also the holy aspirations of the Psalmist, when, contrasting himself with the "men of the world, who have their portion in this life," he says—"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."* Who, with the Bible in his hand, can ever speak of an unregenerate man longing for perfect likeness to God, and incapable of being satisfied till he attains to it! But Dr. Clark brings an exemplification of the unregenerate experiencing this delight:—"They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God."† This is almost as surprising as the other. Who

* Psalm xvii. 15.

† Isa. lviii. 2.

ever understood the prophet in that passage as describing the real and sincere, “seeking after God,” and “delighting in His ways?” Nothing can be further from the truth, as the entire context shows. The interpretation of Lowth, proceeding on this principle, gives obviously the true sense. On Isaiah lix. he says—“The foregoing elegant chapter contained a severe reproof of the Jews, in particular, for their hypocrisy, in pretending to make themselves accepted with God by fasting and outward humiliation, without true repentance, while they still continued to oppress the poor, and to indulge their own passions and vices.” It is indeed passing strange, that any man taking a glance, even the most hasty, of that chapter, should sincerely and deliberately bring forward such a proof! Look at the first verse. Look at the kind of service they rendered, and the reason why it was indignantly rejected.* And compare with the passage others of similar import.† The religion of a people described in such terms, supposing them to have had a self-righteous pleasure in going the punctual and formal rounds of external service, can never be a counterpart to that “delight in the law of God after the inward man,” which inspired the earnest and impassioned longing for deliverance from whatever remained in him, that was opposed to the constant and unimpeded and perfect exercise and influence of holy principles and affections.

Stuart takes ground somewhat different. He contends for the necessity of putting on the term “delight” a qualified sense; just as we have seen with the opposite word “hate.” He was aware that an unrenewed man could not, in the obvious and proper import of the word, be said to hate evil; and he was equally aware, that neither could such a man, in the obvious and proper sense of the term, delight in the law of God. Both terms, therefore, must be qualified in their meaning. The one must not mean “positive hatred,” but only inferior love. And the other must not mean, what in itself it does mean, the intensity of pleasure, but only the

* Isa. lviii. 3—7.

† Isa. i. 10—15; Ezek. xxiii. 30, 31.

approbation, and (with a kind of apology for the word, as if even it were rather more than could be predicated of a man entirely under the dominion of sin, and succumbing to it in every instance,) "the complacency (so to speak) which reason and conscience yield to the divine law, as holy and good." The position he assumes in vindication of this qualified sense of the terms, namely, that a qualified sense of the opposite terms is equally necessary on the other hypothesis (that which interprets the passage of the regenerate), may be admitted to have some claim to ingenuity; but cannot, in my judgment, be admitted as having any to soundness. He thus expresses himself, and he repeatedly adverts to the same thing:—"Whoever insists, then, that the passage before us must be applied to the Christian, because of some strong expressions in it which seem to indicate true moral good, should also take notice, that, by the very same principles of interpretation, he will, of course, be obliged to concede, that a carnal state and entire devotedness to the passions is described. To avoid this conclusion, he considers these last expressions as used in a qualified or moderated sense; and accounts for them by the fervour of the writer's feelings and the nature of the contrast. But who does not see, that the very same rule, when applied to the passages which seem to indicate moral good, or holiness, will so modify them as to make the application of them to true Christians altogether unnecessary? The reason and conscience of the unsanctified, especially when they are awakened by the terrors of the divine law, present sufficient ground to justify the use of the language here employed in such a modified sense as that now supposed."*

I presume the question, "Who does not see?" implies that the thing is so manifest, that all are blind who do not see it. I must confess myself of the blind. The two sides of the case do not appear to me to have in them any such parallelism as to justify the confident question. Without entering into detail, I say this on two grounds:—

* *Excursus*, p. 537.

1. I have granted that the language expressive of the consciousness of evil is very strong. I have assigned what I believe to be the reason of this, and shown the natural principle on which that reason rests. It is the language of exaggeration, naturally dictated by the strong repugnance of the principles and feelings of the renewed soul to the remaining corruption of which it was conscious. And the same principle applies in full emphasis, we shall see, to the language of the twenty-fourth verse—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The simple question, then, is:—Does there exist the same natural principle on which to explain, or account for, the strong terms, as they are admitted to be on the other side, when the speaker is supposed to be an unregenerate man? For my own part, I can find no such principle. We can at once understand how the loathing of evil in a sanctified soul should produce the utterance of strong terms of self-accusation and self-condemnation on account of it; and we can at once understand, how the convictions of an awakened conscience in an unregenerate man, a man entirely under the power and love of sin, should produce strong language too—the language of terror, and it may be of regret—the terror agonizing, and the regret bitter, in proportion to the amount of clearness and strength in the convictions by which they are inspired. We might even include, as capable of being accounted for on such a principle, strong, and were that possible, exaggerated expressions of self-condemnation, only without the softening of true contrition. But the terms employed in this passage are not of either of these descriptions. They are terms which, in their full and natural import (natural in the ordinary use of language) express the feelings of a renewed and holy mind—hated of sin, delight in the law of God. Now we can readily conceive strong emotion exaggerating the expression of what actually exists; but what kind of exaggeration is it that introduces what does not exist at all, and what, in order to its consistent explanation, requires to be explained away? And this leads me just to notice—

2. That in the one case, the terms are not changed in their meaning, when considered as the language of exaggeration, and, as such, not to be taken by the reader in their full amount of literal meaning; but in the other case, the qualification of the terms actually converts their meaning into something essentially different. They make hatred synonymous with conviction of sin in the conscience, that is, with the very thing from which the strong expressions are supposed to arise; and delight synonymous with mere approbation or conviction of rectitude in the conscience; two things essentially dissimilar.

But while his heart's desire is, to be fully conformed to God's law in temper and conduct, he finds from remaining corruption, powerful, and, alas! at times too successful, opposition to the fulfilment of this desire.

I have already noticed the sense of the word "law."* The law of his mind is the same as the law of his inward man. The promise of the new covenant may illustrate this: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."† The inward man is the "mind" or "inward parts," in which the law of God is written by the Holy Spirit. According to the law of his mind or the principles of the new man, he delighted in the law of God. But he saw, or felt, or was conscious of, another law or principle—a tendency quite the opposite of that of his mind. As the law of his mind is not merely the light of conscience, but the operative principle of holy love to God in the heart; so the law in his members, being the opposite of this, must mean the remaining power of that "mind of the flesh," as it is afterwards called, of which the essential character is "enmity against God."‡ This law he saw, or felt, "in his members." We have had the phrase repeatedly already. Certainly he does not mean literally the body; for the members of his body were the instru-

* Verse 21.

† Heb. viii. 10.

‡ Rom. viii. 7.

ments of the activity of the law of his mind, as well as of this opposite principle. The animal appetites and passions, however, appear to be especially meant; although the principle or law may be considered as existing and operating in all the branches of his constitution, as, to a certain degree, investing and influencing all the powers, both of body and mind. This law “warred against the law of his mind.” It resisted his desires after conformity to God; striving incessantly, with greater or less force, to draw or drive him into an opposite course; and he adds:—“*Bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*”

This expression has been considered as deciding the point in favour of the hypothesis which makes an unregenerate man the speaker. It has been interpreted as if it signified that he was uniformly overcome, actually brought into full captivity. But it expresses no such thing, as that the power of corruption was either uniformly, or even prevailingly, successful. Similar expressions are used to denote a tendency that has not effect.* It was the case with the Apostle, and it is the case with every saint of God, that he feels this law in his members bringing him, that is, constantly tending to bring him into captivity; so that, were it not resisted by “the law of his mind,” by the energy of the new man under the influence of the Spirit of God, captivity would infallibly be its effect. He does not say of the law in his members that it actually *brought* him into captivity, but that he saw or felt it *bringing* him. As if one man were by fair promises and tempting assurances to entice another to accompany him on a certain road; he sets out, but by and by he discovers his intention, he sees that he is leading him into captivity; he instantly resists, and flees, and returns, and so delivers himself. Thus it is with the “law in the members.” It entices on the road of sin that leads to bondage; it sometimes succeeds so far, and the believer, unless in the strength of grace and the vigour of the principles of his new nature he resists, is in danger of full captivity. Surely it is simple

* Ezek. xxiv. 13.

and plain enough that a principle may be felt bringing that does not actually bring, the mind under its full influence. The case here is widely different from that of the unregenerate.* The person here does not thus yield himself a voluntary captive, but resists the power that would enslave him. He is not, in the general course of his life, "led captive by the devil at his will," but lives in warfare between the principle of holiness which predominates, and the principle of corruption which does not reign but is ever striving to gain the ascendancy, and too often succeeds in inducing the combatant to yield for the time. Feeling, then, the power of this opposite principle striving against his new nature, preventing the fulfilment of his holy wishes, chaining down his soul to sin and the world when his desire was to rise to heavenly-mindedness and to God, never allowing him a moment's respite from vigilant resistance, ever and anon in the progress of his attainments driving him back by a too successful effort, thus infusing into the cup of his spiritual joy the bitterness of gall and wormwood, the Apostle exclaims, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"†

6. This forms the next and the last of the general topics suggested by the passage. It is truly marvellous that such an argument should ever have been used, yet has it actually been urged:—Regenerate men are happy, not wretched; therefore, this cannot be a regenerate man's language. One is strongly tempted to suspect that he by whom such an argument could be used, can never himself have felt the burden of corruption, the "plague of his own heart." Is it not the very man whose heart is most under the influence of holiness and the love of God that feels most acutely the anguish of a sense of remaining corruption? A natural man may feel "wretched" under the pressure of guilt upon his conscience, and the fears of wrath, and his ignorance of a remedy. But this is essentially different from the distress of a soul that has been already delivered from a sense of

* Rom. vi. 16, 17.

† Rom. vii. 24.

guilt and the fears of wrath, by faith in the blood of Jesus; but now longs to be delivered also from the power of sin, from its whole power, not merely because it exposes to death and endangers his soul, but because it deprives him of the happiness of being like God, and by hindering the freeness and intimacy of communion with Him, mars the fulness of his joy. It was not the condemning guilt of sin that the Apostle here so pathetically bewailed, but its remaining power. The believer alone can at all enter into the spirit of this exclamation. O, if our abhorrence of sin were such as it ought to be, we should feel more of that wretchedness of which Paul here complains, and more, too, of the same ardent longing after deliverance. It is one of the genuine marks of a spiritual mind.

The question—“*Who shall deliver me?*” is not the utterance of despair, but of longing and vehement desire. This will be manifest from the next verse. In the expression, “this body of death” (for so the words should be rendered to make the phrase consistent and intelligible), some have supposed an allusion to a particular mode of punishing malefactors, namely, by attaching to their bodies a dead carcass or putrid skeleton, from which they cannot disencumber themselves, but must bear it about at every movement. The allusion would, I admit, be very impressive of the horror and loathing of the Apostle’s mind at feeling sin, in all its anti-spiritual loathsomeness, bound so fast and so closely to him. But there is no necessity for any such allusion to make the writer’s language consistent with itself. We have similar phrases before.* The “body of sin,” and the “body of death” seem to be equivalent, and it is called by the latter appellation because of the deadly nature and effects of sin.

While the words do not express despair, for that were incompatible with a state of grace; they do express his strong conviction of the necessity of a power superior to his own, or to that of any creature, for effecting the desired deliverance.

* Rom. vi. 6.

While he bemoans the remaining influence of sin, he feels that he has cause for thanksgiving.*

Whence this thanksgiving? It expresses two things:—Gratitude for what by the grace of God he already was, and still more for what he hoped by the same grace finally to be. The language refers to both present and future time. God, by the emancipating energy of his truth and Spirit, had already made him free from the bondage of sin, and brought him into the glorious liberty of His own children. For this he was thankful, very thankful. It was a delightful privilege. He was Christ's freeman. For "he is the freeman whom the truth makes free, and all are slaves beside." And along with this, he had the animating prospect that, by the supplies of the same divine strength, he should be "more than conqueror" over the powers of sin and Satan that still strove against his purity and his peace; that the painful conflict should in due time cease; that he should be perfectly freed from every vestige of corruption and enjoy God in the full "beauty of holiness."

The Apostle thus sums up what he had been saying of himself:—"So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."† "I myself," the same person, not in different stages of his spiritual progress, but now, at the same time. As the flesh cannot here mean the body, but corrupt nature; so the mind cannot mean merely the mental part of our constitution, but the renewed mind, as formerly explained. The expressions, I shall only further observe, do not signify that the power of the flesh and of the mind was equal. In that case, there could be no character. The meaning is, that, according to the strength of each of the two laws or principles respectively, they draw opposite ways. Ralph Erskine, in his *Gospel Sonnets*, caricatures the portrait drawn by the Apostle when he says:—

"To good and evil equal bent,
I'm both a devil and a saint."

* Verse 25.

† Ibid.

This may be understood as a strong poetical way of expressing the sentiment. But it is fitted to mislead. To constitute the Christian character and distinguish it from that of the world, the principles of the new man must have the decided predominance. The law of the mind must have the dominion. This is the very principle on which the whole description of experience in the previous passage is founded. It is on this ground that the Apostle distinguishes between himself and sin that dwelleth in him; and that he rests the whole account of his character.

The sense of corruption, then, may be known as genuine, and as a mark of Christian character, when it is uniformly opposed in all its workings by the contrary principle of grace in the heart. This must be the ruler. And when it is so, the contention between the two is the radical and leading difference between the believer and the unbeliever, the renewed and the unrenewed. Devils are all sin, angels are all purity. But here is a creature, who, although he is neither a devil nor an angel, has in him the opposite natures of the one and the other. The ungodly are under the dominion, in one or other of its modes of operation, of the flesh or the principles of corruption. But in the believer, while the principles of the old nature remain, a new nature, with contrary principles and tendencies, is implanted. It is predominant. It takes the government of the man. If it be not predominant, any professed sense of its opposite as a source of sorrow and lamentation is utterly vain. It must appear in its predominance by the steady and vigorous resistance of temptation, striving against sin, crucifying the flesh; and at any time when through temptation the corrupt principles have gained a victory, it will appear in the deep anguish of penitential grief; which is just the new nature recovering its tone and power, when the old has obtained a temporary ascendancy.

Because there has been, under the designation of Christian experience, so much of vain enthusiastic feeling, and so much of false unscriptural confidence in states and frames of mind, some have run into the opposite extreme of laughing at all

feeling in religion together; as if a tear or a sigh were a uniform indication of weakness, ostentation, or hypocrisy. Yet surely if ever words were used, by lip or pen, expressive of strong feeling, the words before us are. The exclamation, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* is certainly the utterance of grief and anguish of spirit, arising from sensibility to the remaining corruption of the heart, along with ardently longing desire for full freedom from its power. A sense of sin must always be bitter to the soul of the child of God. The corruption of his heart is not a point on which he can think and speak with the cool phlegmatic composure of a reasoner on a matter of pure speculation. Alas! what we have cause to be ashamed of is, not our feeling but our want of it. When we "look unto Jesus" and contemplate the evil of sin in His cross, in the dreadful scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, how can we but be oppressed by the thought of any portion of such an evil remaining in us. How can we but "groan, being burdened" under a sense of its power, even although broken and subdued! Should not our love to Him inspire all the earnestness of desire for deliverance; that so we may be free of that which filled the cup of the blessed Redeemer with such bitterness, and be fully like to him whom our souls love? But to such desires the man of time and sense is an entire stranger. His only wish and anxiety are, that, after having indulged sin to his heart's content, he may escape with impunity.

While this warfare is peculiar to the Christian, it is likewise a part of his true character that he does not despair. Despair is a state of mind at perfect variance with faith. It is altogether unbelieving. It is a feeling of which Satan takes every advantage, that by means of it he may in various ways work the ruin of the soul. The joy of the Lord is His people's strength. Indulged corruption, indeed, may and ought to lead to doubt and despair. But corruption itself should not. It should only lead us to have more constant

* Rom. vii. 24.

and simple-hearted recourse to the “blood of sprinkling,” and to more earnest supplications for the restraining and sanctifying influences of the promised Spirit. While we cry with all earnestness, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” we must watch with all constancy against the inward approaches of evil, keeping the heart with all diligence. We must adopt Paul’s prayer in behalf of the Ephesians for ourselves and for each other,* and to show the sincerity of the prayer, we must act up to his faithful admonition to the same church.†

I shall only add, in conclusion, that there is no incongruity between the strong exclamation of self-dissatisfaction in the end of the seventh chapter and the sublime triumph of “the full assurance of faith” in the close of the eighth.‡ Think you that he had thus risen above the seeming despondency and burdened groaning of the passage we have had under review, and that the longing exclamation of the twenty-fourth verse was forgotten, and would have been quite out of unison with these terms of exulting confidence? My own full conviction is, that at the close of this sublime climax he would have repeated the exclamation with greater emphasis and earnestness than before. The stronger his impressions of the blessedness springing, and to spring for ever, from the love of Christ and of God, the more vivid and rapturous his anticipations; the heavier, methinks, would be the sigh he would heave over that which formed the only impediment to the full enjoyment of it; and the more ardent his longing for deliverance from every vestige of its hated power!

* Eph. iii. 14—19. † Eph. vi. 10—18. ‡ Verses 32—39.

LECTURE XXXIV.

ROMANS VIII. 1—11.

“ There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

THE Apostle has illustrated and confirmed by irresistible arguments the fundamental article of the Gospel,—that a guilty sinner is “ justified freely by grace;” he has developed this great truth in its various bearings and connexions; he has enlarged on the influence which the reception of it uniformly exerts, and necessarily must exert, in depriving sin of its dominion in the soul,—converting those who are its slaves into servants of God, “ having their fruit unto holiness;” “ delighting in the law of God after the inward man;” earnestly desiring to be conformed fully to its holy dictates, though the flesh still continues to “ lust against the spirit.”

And of these blessed truths he seems to present in the first verse of this chapter a short comprehensive summary:—“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Being “*in Christ*” is a phrase in use by our Lord himself.* It signifies two things:—*first*, connexion with Jesus as the substitute of the guilty in his atonement, and a consequent saving interest in the virtue of that atonement:—and, *secondly*, spiritual union with Jesus as the source of vital influence, so as to derive from him all needful supplies of grace.—In the present connexion, it seems to be in the former of these two senses that the expression is used; since the particular effect specified as resulting from the union is deliverance from “*condemnation*.”

We have seen, on former parts of the Epistle, that all, as transgressors of the divine law, are under sentence of condemnation to death. From this sentence those who believe in Christ are freed; and they have this freedom in virtue of their relation to Him as the atoning substitute of sinful men. Their release is perfect. To them “there is *no condemnation*:”—for as Christ’s righteousness, not their own, is the ground of their acceptance, the sentence which would bring them into condemnation must be a sentence condemnatory of the righteousness of Christ.

There cannot be a more extraordinary assertion, from any one professing to draw his views from the Scriptures, than that *all* are “*in Christ*,” and all thus freed from condemnation! I might direct you to various passages, where being “*in Christ*” is manifestly the distinction of believers from the world. But any such proofs are at present needless. The verse itself contains sufficient refutation of the sentiment.† It is a fearful thing when interpreters would thus, in supporting a favourite dogma, destroy the grand distinctions between the believing and the unbelieving, and remove the sacred landmarks of the Word of God!

Let it be distinctly marked, then—for nothing is of greater

* John vi. 56; xv. 4—7.

† Compare 2 Cor. v. 17.

moment—to prevent the mischievous abuse of the comfortable and blessed truth we have been stating—that all who are “in Christ Jesus” bear a certain character: so that he who has not this character, if he professes to have any interest in the pardoning virtue of his blood, “is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” The character is *here* expressed by their “*walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*”*

I need not say that a man’s *walk* in Scripture means the general course of his conduct. “*The flesh,*” we have already seen, signifies, in the phraseology of this Apostle, the principles of corrupt nature. It might seem reasonable, therefore, to interpret “*the Spirit*” in a similar sense, as meaning the spiritual or new nature, as distinguished from the carnal or old nature. I am satisfied, however, that in most, if not all, of its occurrences throughout the chapter the term is used as a designation of the Holy Spirit himself, and that it ought therefore to be so interpreted here. The two senses of the word indeed yield much the same general meaning: for to walk according to the new or spiritual nature is to walk according to the principles of a nature of which the Spirit is the author and maintainer in the soul, and cannot therefore differ from walking according to the Spirit. To “*walk after the flesh,*” then, is to be under the dominion of sin—to be influenced and guided by unholy principles and affections;—to follow, in the ordinary tenor of life, the impulses of depraved nature:—while to “*walk after the Spirit*” is to walk according to the truth which the Spirit has dictated, and under the Spirit’s holy influence. This influence fills the hearts of believers with love to the law of God as well as to

* This clause has very slender authority, and is treated as a gloss in most, if not all critical texts from Griesbach to Tischendorf. That the author should have overlooked this is matter of surprise; but it does not materially affect his exegesis of the passage—though indicating a slightly different link of connexion with what follows. The principle which runs through the whole passage remains the same. The association of *character* with *state* is one of its pervading elements; and the character is exhibited in the very same terms in the close of verse fourth—from which they have probably been transferred into verse first.—ED.

his Gospel, so that they “delight in it after the inward man,” and seek increasing conformity to its dictates.*

The second verse of the chapter appears to be connected with the *latter clause of the first*. Men are naturally the subjects and the slaves of sin. How come any then to “walk after the Spirit?” The question has its answer in the verses which immediately follow:—“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

1. Mark here, first, the *emancipation effected*—“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” What are the *two laws* here spoken of?

In answer to this question, I observe, that the most legitimate source of explanation is the immediate context. We are often in danger of being misled by the division into chapters; and to look at the beginning of a new chapter, as if it were always the beginning of a new subject, and insulated from what precedes. Now, although in one sense the Apostle does proceed here to a new branch of his great theme of illustration, yet, you perceive, it is inferentially connected with what goes before:—Is this connexion immediate or remote—general or particular?—It is *both*. It is a conclusion based on all the previous statements and discussions:—but the phraseology is evidently taken from what the writer had just said. There are *two laws* spoken of in the immediately preceding context.† These, as formerly shown, are called *laws*, in the sense of *opposite principles*, each operating with a certain uniform tendency. It seems natural to understand the two laws in this verse as the same.

* Compare chap. vi., where the character is fully described.

† Chap. vii. 21—25.

“The law of sin and death,” is that principle of corruption which works in the heart, seeks the dominion, and of which the tendency is death—even death eternal. The law opposed to this in the preceding context is called by the Apostle “*the law of his mind*,”—and signifies the principle or ruling power of the new nature, of grace and holiness in the soul. With the strictest propriety may this be termed the “*law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*.” It is produced and maintained by the life-giving Spirit of God:—and it is “*in Christ Jesus*,” because it is by “the truth as it is in Jesus,”—by the doctrine of the cross—that the principles of the new nature are engendered and supported in the soul. The verse therefore, in other words, means, that the new principle or power of grace made him free from the old principle or power of sin. But here there is a seeming difficulty:—how can he speak of being made free by the one from the other, when he so distinctly represents *both as remaining*?*

The solution of the difficulty is not abstruse or far to seek. As when it is said (chap. vi. 14), “sin shall not have *dominion*,” the meaning is not that sin should cease to *be*, but that sin should cease to “*reign*;”† so in like manner, *freedom* here does not mean *entire deliverance*,—the *annihilation* of the power of the law of sin; but only emancipation from its *thrall*. While Paul was “*in the flesh*,” the “*law of sin*” had full unbridled sway. There was no opposing power: I mean no opposing *inclination* or *spiritual tendency* in the soul. There might be the operation of natural conscience and fear; but no desire, no holy liking to that which is good—nothing of what the Apostle expresses when he says—“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” The law of sin then *reigned*. But from this reign of sin he was now made free. The “*law of his mind*,” the “*law of the Spirit of life*,” had now obtained the ascendancy—had broken the power of the former ruling and reigning principle; and the dominion of the new principle was now that which constituted his distinguishing character.

* Chap. vii. 23, 25.

† Verse 12.

It is for this freedom that he “*thanks God.*”* And he at the same time longs with ardent desire—(and in proportion as *we* are spiritually minded our desires will be in unison with his)—for *perfect* deliverance;—that sin might not cease to *reign*, but cease to *exist*;—that the efforts of this power, at variance with God and with goodness, might come to an end for ever.

My brethren, the freedom which even now is enjoyed by those who are in Christ Jesus is an honourable and a blessed freedom. Subjection to the law of sin is the most degrading, as well as the most wretched of all slavery. The liberty of which the Apostle speaks here was included in that promised by Jesus when he says—“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”† We are made free by the Son of God from the guilt of sin and free at the same time from the *power* of sin; and to this our Lord’s words show him to have a special reference. And the man who has not obtained the *one* freedom, has not obtained the *other*. They are only two parts, equally essential, and altogether inseparable, of the same liberty.

And *that* man, remember, is not the only slave of sin,—the only one in whom “the law of sin” bears the dominion,—who addicts himself to what are usually termed sensual indulgences,—who gives the reins to his “fleshly lusts,” and yields himself up to their unbridled sway. If it be sin, to take the heart from God, and to give it to the creature;—if it be sin, to prefer our own pleasure, in any form, to God’s will and to God’s blessing; then every *man of the world* is such a slave:—and that “law of sin” which reigns in him will prove “the law of death.” Its reign is the indication of a state of present spiritual death; and, if he is not “made free” by “the truth” and by “the Son of God,”—if “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” does not take the place of the law of sin and death, and become the ruling principle of his character;—its reign here will issue in death eternal. If he

* Chap. vii. 25.

† John viii. 31, 32.

is not emancipated while here from the bondage of the world,—the hand of Death will only fasten and rivet his chains, for an everlasting servitude and its everlasting wages. The Son alone can make you free;—free by his blood from the sentence of guilt; free by his Spirit from the power of sin and of this present evil world; and free from the fear of death and of judgment: and He invites you to himself; he invites you to this blessed freedom.

No man need continue the slave of sin who wills to be free. If you come to Him in earnest for liberty, there is no reluctance on his part to effect it for you. He has full control over the master that holds you in bondage. If you feel that you cannot assert your own freedom, you have only to apply to Him in truth, and he will assert it for you. He will, by the power of his grace, rescue you from the bondage of the tyrant that seeks your destruction, and give you the charter of “the glorious liberty of the sons of God.”

2. The important thought suggested by the third and fourth verses is—*the consistency of this emancipation with the design of the mission and work of Jesus.*

We have noticed the connexion of the second verse with the latter part of the first. There is a similar connexion between the second and the two following verses: “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

It seems to me, that *sanctification* rather than *justification*—deliverance from the *power* rather than from the *guilt* of sin, is the subject of the whole passage;—and by the connexion of the second with the third verse, God is represented as *intending*, by the work of Christ, the deliverance of sinners from this thraldom, the bursting of the bonds of corruption, and their restoration to holy spiritual liberty.

1. It is with the *design* more than with the *fact* of the

mission of Jesus that we have to do in illustrating the connexion and spirit of this passage: and on the latter a few words must suffice.

“God sent his own *Son*.” The precise import of this title we had occasion to notice on an early part of this Epistle; and we do not now resume the subject. His being “*sent*” means his being *commissioned* to a particular work; which is in perfect consistency with his Divine dignity.* He was sent “*in the likeness of sinful flesh*.” He appeared, that is, in the human nature, not as it was when man was created, but as subject, in consequence of sin, to pain, infirmity, disease, and death.—The idea is by no means intended that he was personally liable to sin, or in any respect the subject of moral imperfection. The whole New Testament explicitly affirms the contrary. The very manner of his birth was designed to show that he partook not of the hereditary depravity which belongs to all the race:—and how unutterably revolting the thought that he who was “equal with God” could have associated with the incontaminable purity of the Godhead a sinful nature! The *reason* of his assuming “the likeness of sinful flesh” is thus assigned, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”† And the *necessity* of his being himself without sin in that nature, is affirmed in language equally distinct—“For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the

* Phil. ii. 6-8.

† Heb. ii. 14-18.

heavens: who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."* As he was sent "FOR SIN," one stain of sin would have disqualified him for the purpose of his mission.—Some render the words "for sin,"† "as a sin-offering." It is true the phrase has this signification in the Septuagint.‡ But "for sin," or *on account of sin*, expresses equally well the reason of his mission: and that the preposition has this sense, there is no question.§

2. Another point suggested is the *immediate and ultimate design of Christ's mission as to sinners*—"hath condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

What is meant by "condemning sin in the flesh?"—Some understand by "the flesh" the *human nature of Jesus*; and conceive the Apostle to say that *in the flesh*, that is, by his sufferings and work in the nature he had assumed, he "condemned sin."

To me it appears that "the flesh" has the signification here which it most usually has with this Apostle,—namely, that of *corrupt human nature*; and "condemning sin in the flesh" is *sentencing it to the loss of the dominion which it has held over the fallen nature of man*. In that nature it reigns. By the death of Christ its reign is destroyed.

We have examples of similar modes of expression;—"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged;"|| "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."¶ The prince of this world being *judged*, means that his sentence was passed, in fulfilment of which he was to be "*cast out*." His usurped and illegitimate power received its death-blow. He was condemned to the

* Heb. vii. 26—28.

‡ See Heb. x. 6, 8. § See 1 Pet. iii. 18; Heb. x. 18; xiii. 11.

|| See John xvi. 11.

† *τρεπ ἀμαρτίας.*

¶ John xii. 31.

loss of his dominion in the hearts and over the persons of men. In like manner—*sin* was judged when the prince of this world was judged. The sentence of the one was the sentence of the other. The power of both was one: and when one was “cast out,” so was the other.

God has from the beginning been at war with sin. He had, in ancient times, a few trophies of victory; a few whom, in anticipation of the sentence to be pronounced and executed “in the fulness of time,” he rescued from sin’s dominion. This was a prelude to the death-blow that was to be struck against the reign of sin by the appearance and work of Immanuel. In his sufferings unto death the power of sin over those whom it was the sovereign purpose of God to save by him, was crushed:—and this is made manifest, when by the application of the blood of Christ to their consciences by his Holy Spirit, they are “purged from dead works to serve the living God.” When Jesus said, “It is finished,” the sentence against sin was solemnly pronounced; and the certainty of its execution settled and sealed with his blood. The sentence was executed when sin, which had been virtually condemned, was actually ejected from its dominion;—when sinners were freed from its power by Christ; made his own subjects—“brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.”

With this, verse fourth is in full accord:—“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them, inasmuch as, *in Christ*, they are *justified* on the ground of a perfect righteousness, fully commensurate with the demands of the Law in all their extent.* But the Apostle speaks here, not of the blessing of *justification*, but of *sanctification*; and in virtue of their connexion with Christ, it is His will that they should be brought into conformity in personal character with his law; not *partially*, but *completely*:—having “the righteousness of the law *fulfilled* in them,” their minds and hearts brought into fault-

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

less correspondence with its principles; and their entire character into unsullied agreement with its precepts. This, it is true, is not fully effected in the present life; but the salvation of God is in *no* respect perfected here. It is an “eternal salvation,” of which the perfection is to be enjoyed hereafter. They shall all ultimately, in their blissful experience, be made perfectly like to Him who fulfilled the demand of the law in their room;—who, in the full extent of its requisitions, was “without spot and blameless.” “That which is in part shall,” in due time, “be done away,” and “that which is perfect shall come.” In heaven, there shall be a full conformity, in all, to “the righteousness of the law:”—its first grand principle—“love to God,” being the universal impulse of heavenly service, and source of heavenly bliss.

3. Mark further,—the *incompetence of the Law* to “condemn sin in the flesh:” This “the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh.” It is true that *by a verbal sentence* the Law *does* condemn sin in the flesh.* But it could not overcome it. It could neither provide an atonement for the transgressions of it, nor furnish any adequate constraining power to obedience to its precepts. Not that there was any defect in the Law itself. It was all that the law of a just and holy God could be. But it became “weak through the flesh”—that is, it was insufficient to “condemn sin in the flesh,” *through the power of corruption*. The law being “weak through the flesh” is the same, in effect, as the power of corruption being *too strong for it*. The law, with all its light and sanctions, its threatening and implied promise, had not efficient power to keep man, when in his perfect state, from falling:—infinitely less has it influence enough to overcome the power of sin in man, when *fallen*. So far is the Law from being able to restrain from sin, that its very commands and prohibitions operate on corruption as incentives to rebellion.† It is the doctrine of the CROSS alone that, under the teaching of the Spirit, slays the enmity

* Gal. iii. 10.

† Chap. vii. 5, 8, &c.

of the heart, and draws its affections to God: and in exact proportion as this love prevails, it will be the “fulfilling of the law.”

In the fifth verse, the two opposite *courses* of life referred to in the close of verse fourth are traced to their origin in the corresponding inward states—“For they that are after the flesh do *mind* the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit,” and it is by the opposite tendencies, as thus indicated, of the two great principles “the flesh” and “the Spirit,” that the principles themselves and those who are under their influence are to be distinguished.* The word rendered “*mind*”† is one of pretty general import: sometimes expressive simply of thought or opinion; but more commonly having reference to the *disposition*. It might be rendered by our word *affect*, in the sense in which the poet uses it when he says that “some *affect* the sun and some the shade.”‡

In the general designation, “*they that are after the flesh*,” no small variety of characters is comprehended. The world are ever ready to understand the phrase as exclusively designating the man of gross, grovelling animal appetites. But according to the scriptural use of it, it is vastly more extensive in its range. The man of ambition, the covetous man, the sober, plodding, honest, but earthly-minded man of business, the epicure, the vain beauty, and even the man of

* Here we have the same distinction, expressed in the same terms, as that made by Jesus himself to Nicodemus—“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit,” John iii. 6. To interpret the terms of this verse, as if they referred to mere *matter* and *mind*,—the body and the soul,—would be in the highest degree absurd. The words assign a reason for the necessity of regeneration; and, viewed in this light, “that which is born of the flesh,” obviously means man as born into the world; and the affirmation “*is flesh*” must signify his being corrupt, destitute of spiritual principles, desires and affections, and requiring not partial reformation only, but such an entire and radical change as is aptly represented by being “born again.” [For further illustration of this passage see Theol. Lects., vol. ii., pp. 129-132.—Ed.]

† φρόνμα.

‡ It is the same word in Col. iii. 2; Matt. xvi. 23; Phil. iii. 19; Rom. xii. 16.

science, whose mind is engrossed in the pursuit and acquisition of other knowledge to the neglect of that which the Spirit of God has revealed—all are included among those who “mind the things of the flesh.” All, in a word, “mind the things of the flesh” who are not “minding the things of the Spirit.” There is no *middle* class.

What then is it to “*mind the things of the Spirit?*” It is to have a desire after and delight in God’s word, and the discoveries He has there made of himself,—of His ways and of His will.* It is to have a desire after and delight in the enjoyment of God,—in His favour and fellowship.† It implies desire after heaven and delight in the thought of its pure and holy joys;‡ and hence the habitual desire and careful cultivation of all “the fruits of the Spirit”—conformity in heart to his blessed influence evinced by conformity in *life*. This is the grand practical test of a man’s being “after the Spirit.”§

Which of these is *your* character? The question is not one of trivial importance. Mark what follows—(v. 6.) “For the minding of the flesh *is death*.” It is present death—the death of the soul “in trespasses and sins,”—a state of real misery, and a state that shall issue in death eternal. The contrary, “the mind of the Spirit,” or spiritual mind, “is life and peace.” It is spiritual life—the true life and happiness of the soul. The principles and dispositions which have been mentioned cannot but by their exercise impart real and sterling joy. The man who is an entire stranger to them only *exists*—he does not live. The enjoyments of the spiritual mind,—the renewed and purified soul, are the zest and relish of “the life that now is;” and the introduction and foretaste of “the life that is to come.” They are “the life of heaven begun below.”—The exercise of these spiritual principles diffuses “*peace*” through the soul—a peace that

* Compare 1 Cor. ii. 9—11; Psalm i. 1, 2; cxix. 72, 97, 103, &c.

† Psalm iv. 6, 7; lxxiii. 25, 26; Hab. iii. 17, 18.

‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18 gives this as the distinctive characteristic of the children of God; Phil. iii. 20, 21; Col. iii. 1—4; Matt. vi. 19—21.

§ Gal. v. 22—26; Phil. iv. 8.

“passes all understanding:”—a calm and holy repose of spirit to be consummated on high: “they shall enter into peace.”

The reason of this difference lies in the very nature of the thing—verse 7. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” This expresses the very essence of corruption. As the sum of spiritual obedience lies in love to God; the sum of depravity, including all its endless variety of forms and modifications, consists in this “enmity against God.” Strong as the expression is, this is decisively pronounced to be the character of the unrenewed mind. It is not merely said that in the unregenerate man there are principles of opposition to God; but that there are *no* principles of friendship towards Him. His mind being wholly carnal, and there being in the flesh no good thing—all is enmity. And it is enmity against the *true* character of God that is meant. It must be this, if it be anything really evil. Enmity against what God *is not*, is not enmity against God at all. It is the contrary. It is hypothetical love to what God *is*. They surely have a very different conception of human nature from the Apostle, who are accustomed to say that God requires only to be known to be loved—that his true character needs only to be fairly presented to the human mind to ensure the affections of the human heart. Alas! alas! how very different the testimony of facts! how decidedly corroborative of Paul’s short but striking verdict! The entire history of religion in our world, as we have seen,* speaks the same language. And, tried by all the usual tests of affection, the verdict is confirmed. Will they bear to be applied in the present case? Not one of them. Is God the favourite subject of men’s thoughts and conversation, to which they are ever prone to recur? Is God’s company the society they most eagerly seek to enjoy? Are they sensitively shocked with whatever injuriously affects God’s honour, and for the sake of it indifferent to their own? Is God’s smile what they chiefly

seek, and God's frown what they most shrinkingly dread? Is God's will what they are most solicitous to know and to do? Who that has the slightest vestige of candour will answer these questions in the affirmative? And how is enmity to be ascertained but by the ordinary tests of love?—*All* the perfections of God are hated by the carnal mind. Depravity, or the love of sin, necessarily implies hatred of divine holiness. Conscience, producing a sense of guilt and fear of punishment, engenders abhorrence of divine justice. The omniscience of God is hated, because it precludes the possibility of escaping detection. The power of God, because it prevents and sets at defiance all resistance. The faithfulness of God, because it shuts out the hope of his repealing or proving false to his denunciations:—and even divine mercy, because in its free and sovereign exercise, it leaves no gratification to that pride and self-sufficiency, which, being the origin of man's apostasy, lies deeply seated in his fallen nature, rises in rebellion, scorns and spurns it away.*

The proof that is here mentioned is practical and palpable—“*For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*”

The grand evidence of love to God is strongly expressed by the Apostle John:—“This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.”† The contrary, therefore, is conclusive evidence of the *enmity*. Every unrenewed man is a child of disobedience, and, being so, is “an enemy of God.” So far from being “subject to the Law,” especially in the spirituality of its requirements, the depraved heart is stirred and instigated to sin by the very holiness and strictness of the Law.‡ The further expression—“Neither indeed *can be*,” needs little explanation or proof. As all true subjection to God's law must spring from love, the “carnal mind,” being, not love but enmity, cannot in the nature of things be subject to it. This were to suppose hatred operating in the manifestation

* This principle is largely and forcibly illustrated in connexion with the subject of human depravity in Lects. on Syst. Theol., vol. ii. pp. 116—170.

† 1 John v. 3.

‡ Comp. chap. vii. 5, 8.

of love. There is in the verse a twofold proposition—and each branch of it has its appropriate evidence. “The carnal mind is enmity against God:” the proof is—“It is not subject to the law of God.” “Neither indeed *can* it be subject to God’s law:” the reason is—“It is enmity against God.” This too is a plain and substantial reason why “to be carnally-minded is *death*.” This enmity cannot but be the present death and misery of the soul:—and it must terminate in death eternal; for it cannot escape “the wrath to come,” and indeed it is the very essence in itself of future misery,—alienation and everlasting separation from God the Light of the universe.

An inference is drawn in verse 8:—“So then they that are in the flesh *cannot please God*.” This is a very solemn and awful consideration. I can conceive of none more so. Callous indeed must be the state of the heart that does not feel it!—It must be very evident, that the meaning is not that they cannot render such an obedience as may satisfy God and so procure their acceptance in His sight; for this is true of *all*—of those who are “in the Spirit,” as well as of those who are “in the flesh.” In this sense, God can be “pleased” with no sinner but in his Son, and on account of *His* righteousness. The awful import of the words is, that *in nothing* can they please God,—that all they do is sin, and displeasing in his sight; and the plain reason is what had just been stated in the preceding verse. The great principle of all acceptable service is wanting. Whatever comes from a heart at enmity with Him, cannot be otherwise than hateful in His eyes; even when it may wear the outward semblance of good. The only principle from which any action truly pleasing to God can be performed by a sinful creature, is “faith working by love.” All the directions how to “walk so as to please God,” are given to those who are partakers of this precious faith; and are simply directions how they should manifest their faith and love. All they are enabled to do is, like themselves, “accepted in the Beloved.”

In writing to the Hebrews, the Apostle, after describing the peculiar perils of apostasy, and of unfruitful profession, adds,

“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.”* He expresses in a like connexion here, the same favourable opinion of the believers at Rome—verse 9. “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.” Their Christian character and profession stood high.† Yet there was a *possibility* that, as to some of them, he might be deceived. He therefore adds, to keep awake their self-jealousy and bring all to one important point of self-examination, the “*if so be*,” which follows—“If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” The Holy Spirit is the author of the spiritual life in the souls of believers. He enters with the truth. By it He makes way for himself, and prepares his own habitation. He abides with the truth. By means of it He maintains his residence. All his operations on the mind and heart are by the truth. It is his to “take of the things of Christ and show them to the mind” in their native excellence, and to give them their influence in subduing and cleansing the heart, and making the inner man a suitable temple for Himself. The Spirit is here called, as in other places, “the Spirit of Christ.”‡ And mark the solemn and peremptory declaration—the declaration of God himself, “If any man,” be his profession and his outward appearances what they may—“if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is *none of his*.” He has no connexion with Him. He has no interest in the saving virtue of his mediation; in his mediatorial love; or in the powerful prevalence of his intercession: Christ will at last disown him. “Having the Spirit of Christ” does not mean having His *miraculous* gifts. These were possessed by some who have perished.§ It is to have Him as the Spirit of truth dwelling in the heart, and manifesting his presence and abode there by his gracious and holy influence;—in one word, by *resemblance to Christ* in character united with simple and exclusive *dependence on Christ* as the foundation of hope. No one can have the

* Heb. vi. 9.

† 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

‡ Chap. i. 7; xvi. 19.

§ Matt. vii. 21—23.

Spirit of Christ, who makes any thing else or any thing more than Christ the ground of his acceptance with God; and no one has the Spirit of Christ, in whom that Spirit does not work resemblance to Him on whom his influences were poured “without measure.”

Thus the people of God in Christ are freed from condemnation; are rescued from the dominion of sin; have the hope of perfect deliverance from all its remaining power; have the Spirit of God even now dwelling in them, and in their persons and services are accepted of God in Christ. In the next two verses—the Apostle extends this view of their blessedness, as to both parts of their constitution—their bodies and their spirits:—verse 10, “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.”

“*If Christ be in you.*” The connexion clearly shows that this phrase is here used as equivalent to “*the Spirit of Christ*” being in them. It is only thus, indeed, that Christ can be said to be in his people. They are “one spirit.” And it is the testimony concerning Christ understood and believed under the teaching of the Spirit, and retained by his influence in the mind and heart, that constitutes “Christ in them the hope of glory.”*

The two following clauses must be taken together—“The body is dead because of sin: but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” “The body *is dead*” means its being mortal—doomed and subject to death—as surely as if it had already died. But the death of the body is not at all owing to “Christ being in them.” It connects only with “*because of sin.*” Sin is the cause of death in all; in the believer as well as in others, although to the former the sting and curse of it are taken away. But, although “the body is dead because of sin,” yet “the spirit is life because of righteousness.” There are cases, in which the immediate connexion evidently dictates a change in the meaning of the same

* Comp. John xv. 4—7, where the Saviour identifies *his* being in his people and his *words* abiding in them.

word. This seems to me to be one of them. The Spirit means in general in the chapter, *the Holy Spirit*: but here, as standing opposed to "*the body*," it is most naturally taken to denote *the renewed soul*.—*It is life*. The spiritual life which is begun here, is a life that shall suffer no interruption, no temporary suspension or cessation. Death, by separating the soul (which is the seat of it) from the body, only raises it to its perfection, by setting the immortal spirit free from all remaining corruption and sin.

This life is "*because of righteousness*." And this must surely mean the righteousness of Immanuel. The cause of the death of the body, and the cause of the life of the soul, being contrasted in the verse, naturally suggests this interpretation. It is on account of *His* righteousness that the believer is a partaker of spiritual life, and has the hope of its consummation in life eternal. But for his obedience unto death, "*the spirit*" could never have been "*life*;" but must have continued in death, and sunk to perdition under the weight of the divine curse.—That this is the meaning is probably intimated by the expression—"if *Christ be in you*." The righteousness is that which we possess in consequence of his being in us—in virtue of our union with him.*

But this is not all. While "*the spirit is life*," the body is not to continue in the state to which sin has brought it. Its being subjected to death is only to give the more triumphant display of the Saviour's grace and power, and of the virtue of his mediation. Verse 11. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." "*But*" is evidently here improper. There is no opposition, but a continuation of the statement of privilege—"And if," &c.† The Spirit is called the Spirit "*of him that raised up Jesus from the dead*," because it was in consequence of God's thus raising Him

* 2 Cor. v. 21.

† "It takes up and continues the supposition in the former verse."
—*Ilford*.—ED

up that the Spirit was given. And all who have this Spirit are Christ's; and belong to that harvest of which, in his rising, he is represented as "the first-fruits."*

And their resurrection is to be effected "*by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*"† The same work is ascribed in other places to the Father and to the Son. *Here* indeed the Father and the Spirit are united in it; the Spirit being represented as the divine agent in completing their deliverance. The same Spirit that delivered their souls from the bondage of spiritual death, and produced in them the principles of everlasting life, shall be employed also in saving them from the bondage of the grave. It is the same Spirit that brought life and order out of the dead and dark chaos at first, that shall at the close of all bring life and beauty and incorruption from the wreck and desolation of the tomb.

But shall not *all* rise? Most assuredly: *all* shall thus be "quickened." Not one son or daughter of Adam shall remain in the grave. It would be a blessing to many if they could —for mark the difference among those that shall rise—"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."‡ The bodies of the wicked shall be raised—and made immortal too; but only to share with their souls the curse of "the second death." When the wicked dies—"the spirit is not life because of righteousness":—*it*, too, as well as the body, is "death because of sin." It enters on "the second death," which the body at last is only raised up to share. But the righteous have life begun in the soul here, which, as to the separate spirit, is perfected at death; and then their bodies are raised up to be re-united to their purified and glorified spirits in life everlasting—in unmixed and permanent felicity.§

* Comp. 1 Cor. xv. 15—22; 2 Cor. iv. 14; 1 Thess. iv. 14.

† Comp. 1 Pet. iii. 18. ‡ John v. 28, 29. § John xi. 25, 26.

LECTURE XXXV.

ROMANS VIII. 12—18.

“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

In the first of these verses a practical inference is drawn from the preceding statements:—“Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.” There are two descriptions of obligation: the one arising from the possession of rightful *authority*, the other from the *bestowment of good*—the former the obligation to *obedience*, the latter to *gratitude*. In neither of these ways are we “*debtors to the flesh*.” The power of “the flesh” is the power of a usurper; an illegitimate power, which we are not only under no obligation to obey, but obedience to which is in every instance an act of rebellion against our rightful Sovereign. That which is “enmity against God” cannot have any title to our subjection: obligation of *this* kind is out of the question. And surely, as little are we debtors to the flesh for any good derived from it:—“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall *die*.” “The *second death*” is the amount of our

obligation to the flesh! “But,” adds the Apostle, “if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall *live*”—shall be possessors of **LIFE ETERNAL** in all its present and future blessedness!

We have, observe, in the latter clause an explanation of “living after the Spirit.” It is “through the Spirit, mortifying the deeds of the body.” The “deeds of the body” signify, in effect, much the same as “the lusts of the flesh:” these lusts gratifying themselves, and making their existence and power apparent, chiefly by “the deeds of the body”—the various indulgences of sense. It is only “through the Spirit” that these can be “*mortified*.” A man may from various motives be induced to correct some outward sinful practices, while in other things the dominion of “the flesh” continues to be apparent. But the Holy Spirit is consistent in his operation. His opposition to sin is never partial. He shows his influence by an unqualified and universal resistance to *all* the evil desires of corrupt nature: and the man who spares and cherishes and indulges *any*, shows that he is not under the governing power of the Spirit.

We have more than once had occasion to notice the perfect consistency between such declarations as this and “if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, *ye shall live*.” The exhibition of “*life*” as a result of our “*mortifying the deeds of the body*” is in perfect consistency with the freedom of divine grace in salvation. The principle, as I have had more than once occasion to notice, is sufficiently simple,—that at one time *the ground* of the sinner’s acceptance is the subject, and at another the *character* of those who are the heirs of life is described. And a part of their character, or rather the principle from which it all arises, is their building their hopes exclusively on free mercy. From this germ of spiritual humiliation spring up all the fruits of holiness. The two declarations that “by grace we are saved,” and that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” are equally sure and equally important. It is only while we are “mortifying the deeds of the body,” that we give any evidence of our being of those who have spiritual life, and who shall live for ever.

The *nature* and the *security* of this life the Apostle goes on to illustrate from the connexion which they who have his Spirit bear to God:—Verse 14. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” To be “*led by the Spirit*” is to be habitually under his enlightening and guiding influence. Of the reality of the secret operation of the Holy Spirit on the minds and hearts of God’s people, no one can consistently doubt who believes the Scriptures. Of the nature or mode of this operation we know nothing. It is made apparent by its visible effects; as in the case of the wind, which we can neither trace to its source nor follow to its destination;* and to those who are themselves the subjects of it, by their own immediate consciousness—not of His direct inward working, but of the various feelings, desires and affections of their souls, as corresponding with what God promises the Spirit’s influence to produce. In *this* guidance, there is no enthusiasm. The Spirit leads by the word; not by secret voices in the mind, or by dreams and visions, or by imaginary impressions and revelations,—for which some wait and long, and on which they place an unscriptural and vain reliance. The Spirit leads in the right way, by directing the attention to the word, enlightening the mind to understand it, subduing prejudices and prepossessions both against its discoveries of truth and its dictates of duty, and by a secret holy influence inclining the heart to “run in the way of God’s commandments.”

All believers in Jesus are, in virtue of their connexion with him, children of God.† Now, all who believe in Him are possessors of his Spirit;‡ and their being led by this Spirit “in the way of righteousness” is the evidence of their sonship.§ And while this Spirit is a Spirit of righteousness, he is at the same time the Spirit of peace and confidence towards God:—verse 15. “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”

* John iii. 8.

‡ Verse 9.

† Gal. iii. 26; John i. 12.

§ 1 John ii. 29

The Apostle seems here to contrast in their respective tendencies and effects the dispensation of the *Law* and that of the *Gospel*. This appears from the correspondence of this verse with other parts of his writings;* which contain the same contrast in a more amplified form. The Law from Sinai was “the ministration of condemnation.” It “gendered to bondage.” From this bondage the ordinances of the ceremonial law were not in themselves fitted or designed to deliver.† There were circumstances in the very constitution of the legal ceremonial, that seemed to interdict the fulness of filial freedom in the worship and fellowship of God, which was reserved for Gospel times.‡ It is true that the gospel was then known; and, in proportion as Old Testament believers, by strength of faith and clearness of spiritual discernment, were enabled to see through the shadows to the substance, through the covering veil to the truth beneath it, did they enjoy the peace, and fearless though humble confidence, of New Testament times. But it is, I apprehend, *generally* and *comparatively* of the nature and tendency of the two dispensations that Paul here speaks; the one in itself “gendering to bondage”—“bondage to fear;” and only imparting freedom and confidence by its figuring and anticipating the other:—for although *during the time* of the Law the Spirit of adoption *was* enjoyed, it was not in virtue of any of the Law’s provisions, but in virtue of the terms of that scheme of mercy obscurely made known in it, and designed to be carried into complete effect in “the fulness of time.”

There are considerable difficulties attending the use of the word *Spirit* in the whole of this context, of which the mere English reader is not aware, but which have occasioned a good deal of variety of opinion among critics. I incline to the judgment of those who, notwithstanding the absence of the Greek article in some of the occurrences of the word, and its presence in others, conceive the *Holy Spirit* to be personally meant in almost all of them. I am the more

* Gal. iv. 1—6; Heb. xii. 18—24.

† Heb. x. 1—4.

‡ See Heb. ix. 6—8, compared with chap. x. 19—22.

confirmed in this sentiment, because in several instances where the article is not used, and where the word might seem to have reference to the *disposition* or *temper of mind*, the very next verse resumes it, and fixes the sense to the personal Spirit of God. Thus in verse ninth some would render—"if so be a divine spirit dwell in you; now if any man have not a Christian spirit, he is none of Christ's." But, apart from other objections to this, the eleventh verse *has* the article, and, evidently referring to the ninth, decides the meaning otherwise—"the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead" being clearly the same with the "Spirit of God *dwelling in them.*"

But how, under any dispensation, can the Spirit of God be denominated "*the spirit of bondage?*" Surely the divine Spirit never was given to inspire the feelings of "bondage" and "fear!" Granted. It is the office of the Spirit to impart liberty, and peace, and joy. Perhaps the expression *might* be vindicated, even in application to the Holy Spirit, from the consideration, that He operates by means of the discoveries of his own revelation: the extent of his influence, therefore, must correspond with the state of that revelation at the time. If the former dispensation contained but a dark and incomplete discovery of Gospel truth, and was, in many respects, calculated to engender a servile spirit, the operations of the divine Enlightener and Sanctifier could not go beyond the state of discovery. As the dispensation was one of bondage; so the Spirit, *as operating under that dispensation*, might, in a general and comparative sense, be designated "the Spirit of bondage." But there is no necessity for considering the designation as directly given to the Spirit. We still conceive the Holy Spirit to be meant; and, in absence of the article in the original, understand the sense to be—"for (in receiving the Holy Spirit) ye have not received *a* Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received *a* Spirit of adoption;";*—and whatever difference is marked between the one and the other, does not convey the

* Similarly Alford—"The spirit of bondage = the Spirit which ye received was not a Spirit of bondage."

idea of any diversity between the nature and effects of the Spirit's work under the old and under the new economy, but only of a difference in the *degree* of the *same kind* of operation, corresponding to the difference between the two dispensations.

The Spirit received is more than the spirit of mere *freedom*: it is the spirit of "*adoption*"—the dearest, the most intimate, the most delightful of all kinds of freedom, that of a child under a kindly indulgent, a loved and loving father. This the Spirit imparts by means of the truth—making known to our minds the character of God as it appears in the Gospel, as the God of love, "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,"—"delighting in mercy." It is by leading the mind into this view of the divine character and relation to the guilty, that the Spirit overcomes the enmity of the carnal mind, and fills the soul with love to God, with desire after, with joy and confidence in Him. It is thus that "*by the Spirit we cry Abba, Father*"—not merely using the words, but inspired with the dispositions and tempers of mind that belong to the endearing relation. It is the language of affection, of liberty of conscience, of confident expectation, of filial intimacy, of happiness unfelt before. The *words* are nothing. Alas! how many have hundreds of times used the form of address, whose hearts have been strangers to the spirit which the use of it implies! How often has the invocation of the Lord's prayer been used, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name"—while there has been nothing but the moving of the lips from the power of habit and of association with time and place,—nothing of the heart of a loving, confiding, expecting child.

In using both the *Syro-Chaldaic* word and the *Greek*, for the same relation, the Apostle probably meant to convey the idea of the union of Jew and Gentile under the Gospel, in addressing the same God by the same endearing appellation. Or else, he uses the *Syriac*, and simply explains it by the *Greek*—"We cry *Abba* (which is) *Father*."

The "*fear*" mentioned in this verse is opposed to the feeling inspired by the "*Spirit of adoption*." It is not the

fear of love—the fear which shrinks from offending a tender father—the fear that makes a frown or look of severity go to the heart. No. It is slavish fear—servile trembling apprehension. Where this terror exists, depressing the mind with despondency and holding it at a distance from God, there must be some sad misconception of the nature and design of the Gospel, and of the character of God as made known in it. Of religion this slavish dread is no part; unless erroneous views of God and unbelief be parts of religion; for from these the dread must arise. The true spirit of a believer is a *filial* spirit; and the contrary, too often cherished by the person's self and fostered by the mistaken tenderness of others, is not only distressing to the subject of it, but dishonouring to God, and discreditable to the Gospel.

With regard to this “Spirit of adoption” it is added (v. 16) “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Some would translate—“beareth witness *to* our spirit, that we are the children of God.” And provided the testimony of the Spirit be rightly understood, as consisting not in inward intimations and whispers, or any kind of direct revelation to the individual, but in “the fruits of the Spirit”—the dispositions and character of children—there can be little objection to the idea thus conveyed. But the word has certainly in it the idea of bearing *joint** testimony: and our translation appears to be the true one. The general sentiment seems to be that in the evidence of the believer's sonship there is a concurrence between the testimony of the Holy Spirit and the testimony of his own spirit. We state it simply thus. The Holy Spirit bears testimony *in the word*; and the Holy Spirit operates in the heart. There is of course always a correspondence between the *word* of the Spirit and the *work* of the Spirit. He describes the character of the child of God in the word:—when he operates in the heart it is to produce there the character he has described. Of the production and existence of this character our own spirits must have the conscious-

* συμμαρτυρεῖ τῷ πνευματι ἡμῶν.

ness. Here, then, is the joint or concurrent testimony. It is by the conscious correspondence between the Spirit's influence *in us* and the Spirit's testimony *in the word of truth*, that we know we *have* the Spirit, and *thus* know that we are God's children. The very first of the features of character by which the Spirit in the word distinguishes the believer is entire self-renunciation and dependence on mercy through the righteousness of the Redeemer. This stands prominent. There is no other feature independently of this. Till the sinner's mind is fully subdued to the acceptance of mercy through the Mediator, the Spirit has not begun his work. He dwells not in that heart. His first operation is to bring down the heart to this lowly submission to mercy. But if *this* do not exist; if there is a rising of spirit against the doctrine of acceptance solely by grace,—it is needless to pursue the inquiry further. But along with this, wherever it truly subsists, there will be the other tempers of mind by which, in the word, the children of God are marked. There will be the filial dispositions of fear and love, of humble confidence and joy. There will be a readiness to come to God in every situation, to cultivate intercourse and fellowship with Him. There will be gratitude to Him in prosperity, and patient submission in adversity. There will be a sense of the burden of sin, and a longing to be free from it: and there will be general practical godliness. These are all testified by the Spirit in this very context to be distinctive marks of true discipleship—features in the character of all in whom He dwells. And by producing *in us* these and other features of the Christian character, and giving us the inward consciousness of it, he “bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.”

“*Children of God*” is a title of high dignity—the highest to which a sinful creature can be raised, although too often held in scorn by the world. But it is not a title of dignity merely—it is not, in this respect, like many of the titles of honour bestowed by men on one another. It is accompanied with blessings inestimably precious—present privileges and future joys;—the paternal favour and blessing, the provision,

instruction, guidance, support, consolation and correction of our heavenly Father; and, beyond this life, the “certain hope” of an inheritance infinitely superior to every thing earthly:—verse 17. “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

“*Heirs.*” This expresses the simple idea of the rightful prospect of an inheritance.* “*Heirs of God:*” as being God’s *children*—begotten by Him. The inheritance is prepared, preserved, and bestowed by Him.† “*Joint heirs with Christ:*” as being *his brethren*; and in virtue of our relation to him, sons and heirs.‡—How full of honour this relation to Christ and to God!—And there is included in our being “joint heirs with Christ,” the security of our inheritance. Jesus “the first-born” already possesses it—and that in the name and on the behalf of all his brethren. It is secured to them by his presence in heaven. They cannot forfeit it: for he keeps *it for them*, and keeps *them to it*.

But in this world believers are called to suffer, and often to suffer *for Christ*. To this kind of trial there is probably a primary reference in the expression “suffer *with him*,”—in the same cause and on the same account. The language, however, is fully applicable to all descriptions of suffering. We “suffer *with him*” when we suffer *in the same spirit*.—But “suffering with him,” does not mean merely being the *subjects* of suffering,—but *enduring* it—holding out against its tempting and stumbling influence.§ We must thus hold out to the end, if we would be, as it is here expressed—“*glorified together.*” What a thought! sharers of the glory of Immanuel; whom Jehovah hath exalted at his right hand, and “crowned with glory and honour.” Jesus himself says, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”|| His people shall be

* 1 Pet. i. 3—5.

† Luke xii. 32.

‡ Heb. ii. 11—13, 16, 17; Matth. xxv. 40; Rom. viii. 29.

§ 2 Tim. ii. 11—13; Heb. x. 32—39.

|| Rev. iii. 21.

with him, as witnesses of his honour.* But they shall also be made “like him”—in character, in dignity, in incorruptible life and happiness.†—In the view of this glory, how little did the Apostle think of the trials of this life! Hear his declaration:—verse 11. “For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” It is no hasty, inconsiderate expression. It is the dictate of serious and full deliberation. He weighed the two against each other; here is the result. Weighed against the coming glory, all the sufferings of this fleeting life were in his estimation as “the small dust of the balance.” They were “light afflictions; but for a moment.” With the glory of heaven in his eye—“a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,”—the cross, with all its attendant trials, was easy and light; and instead of exaggerating and mourning over his privations and distresses, he did not even think them worthy to be named. With exultation he followed his Lord in the path of suffering to a participation in the fulness of his joy—remembering the declaration of that Lord—“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”—In conclusion:—

1. Cultivate, my brethren, the spirit of children—the kindred principles of fear and love. Nowhere can these be more effectually cherished in union, than before the Cross. *There* it is that the views of the divine character, best fitted to foster both, are most strikingly displayed. *There* you behold all that is venerable and awful in its purity and righteousness, combined with all that is attractive and delightful in its grace and love. In the contemplation, look up, with all earnestness, for the promised aid of the divine Spirit, to render the contemplation impressive and efficient—giving you, as “the Spirit of adoption,” clear and enlarged views of your heavenly Father’s character, such as shall draw out your heart to Him in all the dispositions of a child—at once in

* John xvii. 24; 1 Thess. iv. 17.

† 1 John iii. 2; Phil. iii. 20, 21; Col. iii. 4.

reverence and in love: and leading you under the influence of that love to a sedulous *imitation* of that all-perfect Being. How pleasing must it be to the divine Father of the family, to observe the growth of true filial dispositions, and of resemblance to himself in all his children! How will He delight in them when, in the place of their final home, his image shall be perfected in them, and there shall be the full sympathy of purity and love between *their* nature and *His*!

2. How truly inviting the religion of Jesus! How false their conceptions of it, who would shroud it in the clouds of gloom and melancholy! Is there any thing gloomy—any thing calculated to darken the spirit with dejection and sorrow in the views which are here presented? any thing gloomy in having God for our Father and heaven for our home? in having likeness to God for our character; the enjoyment of God's blessing as our present portion, and a participation in the glory of God's exalted Son as our future hope? If these things be gloomy, religion is gloomy. But surely here alone is true joy. What a source of enhanced sweetness to the sweets of life; and what a sweetener of its bitters! What a fountain of refreshing comfort amid all its cares and sorrows! What dignity—what blessedness—in possession and in prospect! Compared with this, what is “the world with all its store?”—It is to be found in *Christ*; and He invites *you*, invites *all*, to come to him for it. He receives all. He refuses none. His promise is, “**HIM THAT COMETH UNTO ME, I WILL IN NO WISE CAST OUT.**” And his complaint, uttered with all the tenderness of regret and all the urgency of continued invitation—“**YE WILL NOT COME UNTO ME, THAT YE MAY HAVE LIFE.**”

LECTURE XXXVI.

ROMANS VIII. 19—25.

“ For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now: and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”

THE general connexion of these verses with what immediately precedes is sufficiently apparent. They contain an amplification of what the Apostle had said in verse eighteenth. Having there cast the eye of triumphant hope forward to the “glory to be revealed” in the children of God,—he seizes, as he often does, on the animating theme, and holds it forth, in terms full of energy and beauty, as promising precious benefits not to believers themselves only, but to creation in general, groaning under the sad effects of the sin of man.

The difficulty of the passage has, to the English reader, been increased by the change in the rendering of the original term “creature” and “creation.” I would render it, throughout, *creation*. Then, further, the words “*in hope*,” should be joined with the verse following, and the particle rendered “*because*,” translated “*that*”*—“in hope that the creation

* Alford objects to this rendering on the ground that “it is not

itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption." And, once more, the same words "*in hope*" I would connect with the nineteenth verse; and read the remainder of the twentieth as *a parenthesis*. The whole will then stand thus: "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God, (for the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same,) in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."*

Of the term "*creation*" (*κτίσις*) many interpretations have been given. By some it has been understood of mankind; by some of the Gentile part of mankind; by some of the new creation, the believing people of God; and by some of the body or animal part of believers. In common with others, I would rather understand by it, as already hinted, the visible creation around us, in as far as connected with our own world; and our own world itself principally, with all the creatures in it and composing it, considered as subjected to man, and subservient to his will.† At the close of the six days' creation, Jehovah "looked on everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."‡

likely the *αὐτὴν ἡ κτίσις* would be so emphatically repeated;" but the objection would not stand if the proposed *parenthesis* be allowed; and there does not seem any special reason against it. There is no necessity for connecting *ιν' ἐλπίδι* with *ὑποτάξαντα*. Alford, indeed, says it cannot be so connected: he connects it with *ὑπετάγην*, reading the intervening words parenthetically.—ED.

* 'Η γὰρ ἀποκαραδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν νιῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται. Τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, οὐχ ἐκεῖσα, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα. 'Επ' ἐλπίδι, ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερώθησται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φύσεως εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ Θεοῦ. Οἴδαμεν γὰρ, ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἔχει τοῦ νῦν.

† De Wette, after giving a summary of opinions, including others besides those here mentioned, adds—"The right explanation, is *all animate and inanimate nature as distinguished from mankind*: so Ireneus, Grotius, Calovius, Wolf, Rückert, Reiche, Meyer, Neander, Schneckerburger, Tholuck."—ED.

‡ Gen. i. 31.

Everything was perfect in its kind ; everything in its proper place ; everything adapted to its peculiar end : and all together formed one harmonious and magnificent, though endlessly diversified manifestation of the power and wisdom and goodness of the great Creator. All creation spoke the same language—all uttering forth the divine glory. Of this lower world, man was the appointed and qualified Lord. And so long as man retained his own original character and loyal subjection, all was well. All that was placed beneath his sway when God said—“ Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth,” was used by him in a way consistent in every respect with the end of its creation.—But man fell from his allegiance. He became a rebel ; and in his rebellion, though he had lost his original character, he was not bereft of his original dominion over the inferior creation. He still retained it,—and retained it by a divine confirmation of the original grant.* Retaining his power over the creatures when he had himself thrown off his allegiance to the Creator, the consequence may at once be anticipated. He drew along with him into instrumental rebellion all that was subject to the dominion with which he was invested. The whole of this lower creation was thus brought into a state of unhallowed and monstrous opposition to God—of treasonable insubordination to its legitimate Governor. And so it has continued till the present hour. What was created for God’s glory has been extensively, and in an endless variety of ways, abused to His dishonour ;—fallen man, left to follow the dictates of his alienated heart and rebel will, prostituting every created thing within the reach of his power to the ends of his own ungodliness ; and converting into weapons of war against his Maker whatever had been before employed by him in discharging His commissions and advancing His honour. All, in a word, has been alienated from its original design under the domination of the folly, the iniquity, and the treason of man ; and per-

* Gen. ix. 1, 2.

verted to ends the very opposite of the original purpose, and foreign to its proper nature and tendency. This, along with the sufferings to which the sensitive parts of creation have been subjected, from human caprice and selfishness—is the general idea expressed by creation being “made *subject to vanity*.”*

And this it was “*not willingly*.” The use of such an expression should be enough to show that they are wrong who interpret “*the creation*” of the *Gentile world*, and “*vanity*” of *idolatry*. For most assuredly, it cannot be that this Apostle should ever represent men as having become subject to vain idolatry “*not willingly*;” even he who expressly traces all idolatry to the wilful alienation of the heart from God.† Neither can I imagine the Apostle to mean the descendants of Adam generally as having, in consequence of his transgression, become the subjects of sin and of its consequences “*not willingly*;” inasmuch as the whole guilt of men lies in their being the *willing* subjects of moral pravity, and by the obliquity of their own perverse wills appropriating to themselves the guilt of the original trespass, by which the allegiance of the race was shaken off.—But, by a bold and striking *personification*, the exercise of *will* is here ascribed to the irrational and inanimate creation. The creatures composing it are finely represented as sensible of their unworthy alienation from the great purpose of their being; as feeling their degradation; indignantly resenting the wrong done to themselves, and to their rightful proprietor; groaning under the yoke, and longing for deliverance.

It was on account of the *first Adam* that they were thus “made subject to vanity;” his sin, his apostasy, being the occasion and means of this subjection. This I understand to be the import of the expression—“*by reason (or on account) of him who subjected the same*.” The inferior creatures were

* This quite harmonises with the various senses in which the word *vanity* is used in Scripture, where it signifies what is *unprofitable* and *worthless*; what is *lying*, *deceitful*, and *illusory*; what is *iniquitous* and *unprincipled*; what is *ignorant*, *blind*, and *foolish*.

† Chap. i. 28.

thus by man drawn, as it were, reluctantly into their sad position:—the sentiment that such a position was in direct contrariety to their original design and legitimate tendency; being conveyed with all the force and elegance of a noble figure. The “groans” of creation are very strongly mentioned again in verse 22. “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” They are thus likened to “the pangs of a woman in travail.” And these groans are to be understood, not of the groans merely of actual pain and suffering endured by the sensitive part of God’s creation that are under the power of man; but more especially (in consistency with the supposed personification) of the pains and groanings of restless disquietude and indignant dissatisfaction with the state in which it is forcibly and involuntarily held of alienation from God and subserviency to rebellion. Creation is set before us as filled with distress and horror at this. There is a transferring of what *ought to be* the feelings of the intelligent and moral creatures of God to the brute and inanimate parts of creation, to put the former to shame, as guilty of holding the others against their will, under the thraldom of the spirit of ungodliness;—and, at the same time, while they are earnestly longing for a coming period of emancipation.

By a figure, far from uncommon, the various passions of joy and grief, desire and aversion, hope and fear, are ascribed to unintelligent and inanimate creatures: “Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together before the Lord: for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.”* On the same principle, and in continuation of the figure, the creation is here described as “*waiting*;” waiting “in hope;” waiting in “earnest expectation;” and of this expectation the object is described in verse twenty-first. It consists then, in *two* things—“de-

* Psa. xciii. 7—9; see also Isa. xliv. 23.

liverance from the bondage of corruption," and a participation in the "glorious liberty of the children of God."

"*The bondage of corruption*" may be understood of the same thing as "subjection to vanity." It is the bondage under which creation lies to the "corruption" of fallen man; a bondage, of which it is figuratively represented as feeling the heavy and galling yoke, and longing, with impatient vehemence, for deliverance and freedom. And of this longing there shall be a complete and happy gratification. The period of this is mentioned under the designation of—"the manifestation of the sons of God."

The question now is—What period is meant by this designation? I am ready to grant that the context would seem to favour the idea of its being the time that follows the resurrection of believers.* So, accordingly, it is interpreted by *millenarians*, who contend for the personal reign of Christ during the thousand years on earth, and the *previous* resurrection of all the righteous dead. Could I see that system to be in harmony with other parts of Scripture, I should be ready at once to admit that it affords a simple principle of interpretation for the particular passage before us. But more and more convinced as I am of the inconsistency of that scheme with the discoveries of the word of God in other places, I cannot adopt it here. Doddridge says, very strongly—"To interpret the creation here as chiefly referring to the brutal or inanimate creation *is insufferable*; since the day of the redemption of our bodies will be attended with the conflagration, which will put an end to them." I agree with him in thinking that the redemption of our bodies will be coincident in time with the final conflagration; but I conceive his conclusion too hasty that our principle of interpretation is "*insufferable*."

I have no doubt, then, that the *full* import of the phrase, "the manifestation of the sons of God," *does* remain to be realized at the resurrection of the just. *That* is the time, when, by the "redemption of their bodies," all their expec-

* See verses 18 and 23.

tations and hopes, to the entire amount of God's "exceeding great and precious promises," shall be fulfilled. And it is quite natural, and in harmony with the usual style of Scripture, that the eye of hope should be directed, not so much to any of the intermediate stages, as to the ultimate point, the perfect accomplishment of all the visions of future glory which the word of God unfolds. It is then that *all* the sons of God shall enter on the complete and final possession of their "glorious liberty"—of the fulness of joy that is before God's face for evermore. This being the case, it would surely be very unnatural, if when the inspired writers were speaking of the "hope set before" believers, they were to refer most frequently to any stage of the fulfilment of that hope short of its complete and final attainment. By those who deny that the soul goes into heavenly glory and felicity when it leaves the body, it is asked—How comes it, were this the case, that the sacred writers, when speaking of the Christian hope, so uniformly look beyond the period of death to that of the resurrection? The answer is quite simple—namely, that even if this passing over of the time of death were uniform, the principle of their naturally pointing forward to the *completion* of fulfilled hope, would furnish quite a sufficient explanation of the fact:—and, moreover, that it is *not* uniform; that while the more frequent reference is to the final consummation of bliss at the resurrection, there *is* an occasional reference to the happiness of the separate spirit at death. This is exactly what we might reasonably have anticipated.*

I admit, however, that of the heavenly bliss, either in its first or its second stage, either in its commencement or its consummation—"the creation," in the view we have taken of it, cannot be said to participate. But, although the full "manifestation of the sons of God," and the perfect enjoyment of their blessed liberty, cannot take place till they have been raised from the dead, and so have been released from the bondage of the "last enemy;" yet may the honour and the

* See Phil. i. 21—23; 2 Cor. v. 5—8; Acts vii. 59 with 55.

joy comprehended in the phrase be considered, and this without any unnatural straining, as having their commencement on earth. To those who look at the prophetic descriptions of the period of prosperity awaiting the church in this world, there will not appear any extravagance in applying the phrase to that state. The millennium will be "heaven begun below;" and heaven will be the millennium consummated, the perfection of its light of holiness and knowledge and joy. And it has often struck me as on this subject worthy of remark, how similar the language is, employed by the sacred writers in describing the one and the other,—so very similar as to cause a diversity of judgment among commentators, in different instances, to which it should be applied; the descriptions running into each other, so as to make it difficult to draw the line of distinction between them. No figure of speech is more common in language than that by which the cause and interests of a particular *community* are spoken of as if the members of that community continued the same. The "manifestation of the sons of God" *on earth* will not be the manifestation of all the sons of God individually from the beginning to the close of time. But it will be the triumph of the same spiritual community, the same heavenly kingdom, to which they have all in succession belonged. Through successive generations they are still one people. We are accustomed to this kind of figure every day. We should say *we* were victorious, were we speaking of a successful battle by British arms hundreds of years back.* That period, then, may well be designated the "manifestation of the sons of God," when they and their cause shall be universally triumphant; when all those descriptions contained in the prophetic scriptures, in which the imagery of the loftiest poetry is exhausted, shall find their full counterpart; when Satan shall be bound and his prison sealed; when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," and "there shall be nothing to hurt nor destroy in all God's holy moun-

* See for Scripture illustrations, Psa. lxvi. 6: 1 Thess. iv. 15--17

tain ;" when the purifying and gladdening influences of the Spirit of the living God shall come down on our world in all their variety and in all their fulness ; when the principles of that kingdom which is "not of this world"—which is heavenly in its origin and character and ultimate destination—which is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost"—shall be universally prevalent ; uniting under the common sceptre of Immanuel, the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and the "fulness of the Gentiles"—all their jealousies and antipathies removed, "the wolf dwelling with the lamb"—"one Lord, and his Name one over all the earth." It shall be a time of abounding felicity, because it shall be a time of abounding holiness—the rich anticipation of the final joys of heaven and eternity. This, it is easy to see, will be the jubilee of creation. Not only will the sensitive part of the creatures of God be lightened of their load of suffering, when those who are now their capricious or ruthless oppressors shall be brought under the influence of better principle ; but the change in the general character of the human family will bring with it a corresponding change in the condition and use of creation as subjected to their dominion. It was when man threw off his own allegiance, that he drew the other creatures of God into his unnatural rebellion. When man shall be restored to this allegiance, creation will be restored with him. Long "subjected to vanity," prostituted from their proper use, and in opposition to the end of their existence, to the dishonour of their almighty and all-gracious Maker, they shall then be consecrated anew to His service and glory. They will return with gladness to their original destination, and exult in their restoration to God ; enjoying "the liberty of the sons of God" according to their respective natures and susceptibilities. The moral inhabitants of the earth brought under the influence of the renovating grace of the Gospel, will inscribe on all creation around them "Holiness unto the Lord," and all will be happily sensible of the change. There is peculiar propriety and beauty in this view, when taken in connexion with the subjection of all things to the human nature in the person o

the exalted Redeemer. In this way the language of the eighth Psalm is applied by the Apostle;*—and, as it was by the apostasy of the first Adam that creation was alienated from God, it is under the rule of the second Adam that all is to be restored!

In this Apostle's writings, it is often necessary to take a whole paragraph in order to ascertain the connexion. Having in verse eighteenth spoken of “the sufferings of this present time” in contrast with “the glory to be hereafter revealed, he seems to have taken in his mind a *double* view of these sufferings: to have thought of the sufferings of the collective Church in contrast with the glorious state in which even on earth that Church shall yet be manifested; and also of the sufferings of individual children of God, in contrast with the prospects enjoyed personally by each of them. The glory awaiting the church on earth during the period of “the latter days,” is that in which creation shall participate, and for which creation longs. But there is a glory awaiting each individual saint, for which he “groans” with earnest desire, in the anticipation of full redemption—verse 23. “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” The Apostle does not here speak of any particular description of believers, distinguished from the rest as having the “first-fruits of the Spirit,” understood by some to mean the earliest and best of the Spirit's communications—the most excellent of his gifts. The “first-fruits of the Spirit” signifies the Spirit as the first-fruits of what is hoped for,—the pledge of the future perfection of holy bliss.† The meaning is—not only has sin introduced woe into creation, and been the guilty cause of all its groanings, but even the redeemed themselves, whom God has purchased for himself, whom He has adopted as his children, and on whom He has bestowed his Spirit as “the earnest of the promised inheritance;” even they, so long as they remain in this world, continue to

* Heb. ii. 6—9.

† See the passages cited on verse 16.

“groan being burdened.” Even the privileges and hopes enjoyed by us, and the filial relation to God from which they arise, do not exempt us from causes of “groaning.” Our time of full release and perfect liberty is yet future; and it is the object of our eager anticipation.

The “groaning” has *two causes*:—The *ills of life*,—the troubles incident to us in this world, as the fruits of sin;* and *sin itself*, the cause of all the sufferings of time. This is the chief burden, the chief reason of groaning and longing.† These things inspired the desires of “departing to be with Christ”—of being “absent from the body and at home with the Lord.” Accordingly, in the fifth chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians the connexion is the same as here—the same hope sustaining under the same “groaning.”‡ In this passage we have the full hope of believers stated—though the part first to be realized is mentioned last in order. There is the hope of the soul when it quits the body to be “present with the Lord;” and there is the hope of the body, when it shall be raised up as a new residence for the glorified spirit—a “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” When our “spirits” “return to God,” our salvation is far from complete; and so is the glory of God our Saviour as displayed in it. Our bodily frames must be raised up in glorious immortality, to consummate our deliverance and bliss. The very thought of their being so long confined in the narrow and dark and solitary house, is not itself a cheerful but a gloomy thought. But the hope of the resurrection to life throws a radiance around even the horrors of the tomb.§

The resurrection is called “*the redemption of our body*.” The body remains in captivity to sin and death, when the soul has escaped from its earthly prison, and is “with the Lord.” But, *like* the soul, and *with* the soul, it has been “redeemed” by price; and, in the end, shall be “redeemed” by power: “I will ransom them from the power of the

* 1 Pet. i. 6: Heb. xii. 11.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 1—8.

† Chap. vii. 23, 24.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 42—45.

grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.”* This is the concluding part of our “redemption” by Christ—the complete and final removal of all the effects of the curse.† And this is designated “*the adoption*.” As “children of God,” we are “children of the resurrection.” Jesus was by his resurrection “declared the Son of God;” and was thus introduced to those “pleasures which are at God’s right hand for evermore.” So the resurrection will be the grand “manifestation” of our adoption, and the completing of our filial privileges and hopes. When believers are called “children of God,” the relation includes their whole persons; and their heavenly Father does not perfect that relation, till, at the resurrection, He takes them, in their whole persons, *home* to himself. For this they “wait”—ever looking forward to it as the completion of their bliss.

The general design of the two following verses appears to be, the holding out of this prospect, as a motive to patience and perseverance amidst difficulties and trials: “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”—“*We are saved by hope.*” This is a general truth. Even as to the life that now is, men are sustained and kept from sinking amidst their present distresses, by the hope of deliverance and of brighter days to come. *Such* hope the believer has in common with other men: but should it fail, he has still a hope infinitely better; one that never fails—sure as the word of Him with whom it is “impossible to lie.” “By *this* hope we are saved.” It is “he that endureth to the end” that “shall be saved;” and here is the influence of hope upon final salvation. It is obvious and simple. Hope is the great stimulus to such endurance; imparting encouragement and animation in opposition to all the trials, and dangers, and temptations of our course through life—“But call to

* Hos. xiii. 14.

† 1 Cor. xv. 23.

remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward; for ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. *—In the divine *promise*, hope has its foundation; and in proportion as our faith of the promise is firm, will it be strong and influential.

But hope always and necessarily regards a *future object*. Whenever a thing comes to be enjoyed, it ceases to be the object of hope:—“*For what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for?*” “It doth not yet appear what we shall be:”—and this holding out of something still before us, to be gained only by perseverance in faith and holiness, is one of the divine means of salvation. Hope produces and maintains “*patience*.” And when we consider the object of the Christian hope, well may we “with patience wait for it.” What, O what is there, that we should not willingly forfeit for the sake of it—and cheerfully endure rather than relinquish it!

1. This passage sets before us an humbling and affecting view of the *evil of sin*.—This is the cause of all the groans of creation; the bitter fountain of every bitter stream that has ever flowed through the wilderness of this world; the guilty occasion of all existing evil in the universe. The fires of hell itself have been kindled by sin. As to man, not a tear has been shed, not a sigh has been heard, not a groan has been uttered, not a pang has been felt of corporal fear or of mental distress, that has not had its origin in sin. Philosophers may teach us a different lesson; but such is the

* Heb. x. 32—37.

lesson of revelation;—a lesson to the principles of which enlightened reason gives an unqualified assent.—Of the extent to which the sin of man has affected the brute creation, it may not be so easy to speak with positiveness. We know that all comes of sin, that is endured by them from the hand of man; and there is surely good reason to conclude, that the whole of their sufferings have had the same origin; that there was no suffering in creation till sin entered; and that in all that is endured throughout creation, is to be read the lesson of the divine displeasure against it.

2. How full of guilt is the *wilful* subjection of sinners to “vanity!” Creation has been drawn into the rebellion *unwillingly*: but the rebellion of men themselves is with the full bent of their heart. There is not an unwilling agent of rebellion among the children of men. And is it not a fearful consideration, that man, the rational lord of this lower world, whose chief concern in it should be to see in every part of it the glory of the Maker, and render all subservient to the showing forth of the great Maker’s praise—instead of consecrating all around to His glory, perverts all to His dis-honour, detaining creation in reluctant and groaning servitude to the principles of an unworthy and ungenerous apostasy. Creation groans for deliverance, longing to be employed for the glory of its Almighty Maker:—and you the rational creatures, to whom he has imparted his highest gifts, whom he has made capable of the purest and sublimest of all enjoyments, in the knowledge and love and service of Himself, and to whom He has committed his other creatures, to be used to his praise;—you hold it in bondage; you detain it in its degrading servitude; you rivet the chain from which it struggles to be free; yourselves the *wilful* rebels, and making all things else reluctantly to subserve your rebellion. You who ought to be the officiating priests in Nature’s temple, presenting the homage of unconscious creation, and offering on its behalf, “the sacrifice of praise” to God continually—you yourselves withhold from Him the glory due unto his name; and instead of inscribing “holiness to the Lord” on your own powers and resources, and bringing to

the divine altar the creatures placed under your control, you alienate yourselves from Him, and pervert and desecrate all around you to his dishonour. The presiding Reason of man, which, under the sacred guidance of holy principle, should have given elevation, and sanctity, and blessing to all the creatures subjected to its rule, has, instead of this, turned creation against its God, and become its degradation, pollution, and curse!

3. The moral and spiritual state of the heart may be tried, by the feelings with which a state of things such as that here brought before the eye of hope is anticipated by us. Many have no relish for it. It is not at all such a world as would suit their wishes; a world in which the fear and love of God are to be the dominant principles; in which religion is to preside, and her spiritual joys to be the chief delights of mankind; and in which the glory of God is to be the first and highest end. Multitudes, were they to speak out, would say, that they like the world better *as it is*. The description has no charms for them,—“no beauty that it should be desired.” And yet, strange to say, you may often hear such men express their hopes of going to heaven!—I have often marvelled what sort of place they fancy heaven to be. But the truth is, that is a point which never occupies their thoughts. If, when they use the word, they attach to it any ideas at all, they are mere vague, undefined, unconsidered notions of some place where they shall be exempted from the ills of the present life. To the character of the place and the nature and sources of its joys, they have never perhaps given one moment’s fixed and serious thought.

Allow me affectionately to remind such that there is but *one* heaven; and that heaven is just the perfection of that state of things which we have been describing, as having its commencement on earth. It is a place of spotless purity—the residence of the God of light, into which nothing can enter that defileth—where the perfection of holiness shall constitute the perfection of bliss; the place of the full “manifestation of the sons of God.” Oh what would become of you in heaven! To the man of this world, taken thither

with an unchanged heart, it would be a scene, not only of no pleasure, but of unspeakable distress. The sights and sounds of the holy place would only “pierce him through with many sorrows.” He must shut his eyes to the visions of its glory, and stop his ears to the music of its praise. Instead of looking to God and the Lamb with the complacency of holy love, he could not lift an eye towards the throne but with a pang of shame and agony; and the converse and intercourse of those who have ceased to have a single sentiment or feeling in common with the children of the world, could have no possible relish for him.

4. Let us be excited by the contemplation of the scene thus brought before us to exertion, to contribution, to prayer, for the accelerated progress of the Redeemer’s kingdom, and the “deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption.” We may not live to see that blessed era in all its glory. Yet we do seem to be living on the very verge of it. All the signs of the times indicate its rapid approach—the approach of the “manifestation of the sons of God;” when “the groans of nature in the lower world shall have an end;” when all those delightful visions of which holy men of God have sung to the “sweet harp of prophecy” shall become blessed realities! Happy sons of God! that shall witness and enjoy this glorious manifestation! Yet let us not envy them. We are one with them in Christ; and shall unite with them at last in the final and everlasting consummation of their joy!

LECTURE XXXVII

ROMANS VIII. 26—30.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

FROM the seventeenth verse onwards, the Apostle's theme is, the support enjoyed by believers under the varied trials of life. Amongst the means of this support, he particularly mentions the exalted hopes by which they are cheered and invigorated, so as to “endure to the end,” and obtain final and full salvation.* But glorious as are these hopes, believers are in danger of allowing them to slip out of mind. Such is the influence of “things present” over our minds; so strong is our dislike to suffering; so many, so various, and so powerful are the principles of corruption remaining within us, and such access do these afford to the temptations of the enemy of souls,—that impatient murmurings, and thoughts of rebellion and doubt, are ever apt to arise within us, and to counteract the sustaining and animating influence of our hopes. We stand in need, therefore, of immediate super-

* Verses 18, 23, 24.

natural aid; and such aid, we are here assured, is provided for us:—"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

It is the Holy Spirit, as "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," that "helpeth our infirmities."—"Our *infirmities*" comprehend the weakness and indecision apt to arise from the shrinking aversion of our nature to suffering, and from the want of due vigour in the principles of the spiritual life to resist this aversion, and to contend against the allurements and intimidations of Satan and the world. We are in ourselves utterly "without strength;" and should fail before every trial but for Him of whom it is said—"JEHOVAH, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary: there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."* It is by the operation of the SPIRIT that such declarations are fulfilled. The Spirit "helps our infirmities" primarily by keeping our minds fixed on the work of Christ as the sole foundation of the animating hope just spoken of; and by imparting a deep conviction of the divine sufficiency of that foundation—so maintaining that hope in full and lively exercise. It is by clear and enlarged views of "the truth as it is in Jesus," that faith and love are invigorated; and the invigoration of these principles is the spiritual strength of the soul.† Believers are "strengthened with might in the inner man," when "Christ is made to dwell in their hearts by faith," and they become "rooted and grounded

* Isa. xl. 27—31.

† See Eph. iii. 16, 17.

in love."—The Spirit, moreover, as the "Spirit of adoption," enables the believer steadily to regard God as a Father, in Christ Jesus—kind, and wise, and powerful, and constant in His love: and nothing can more effectually strengthen and gladden the soul under every form and degree of trial.—I incline to think that it is not by any direct physical agency upon the principles of action and of suffering that the Spirit invigorates them, but by the vivid presentation of the truths of God to the mind. Love and hope spring from the truth discerned and believed: and the Spirit, by enlightening and enlarging the understanding, imparts clearer and fuller discoveries of truth, and proportionally confirms the principles that spring from it. "Christ in us" is "the hope of glory." The strength and influence of this hope must be proportioned to the measure of faith, as it arises from the truth believed; and the measure of faith must be in proportion to the spiritual discernment possessed of the truth and its evidence; and the degree of spiritual strength will be proportioned to both. All are from the Spirit.

Of our peace and patient tranquillity, and persevering activity in duty, a large measure arises from the efficacy of "prayer":* Our communion with God is the fulness of our joy. It is maintained through the truth;† and as it is the Spirit's office to reveal this truth to the mind, He "helps our infirmities" by giving us in this way "freedom of access" to God.‡

But in consequence of remaining ignorance, and selfishness, and carnality, we "know not," in times of trial, "what we should pray for as we ought;" either as to the *matter* or the *manner* of our petitions. The desires of nature strongly dispose us to seek the removal of the suffering; and through the biassing influence of these desires, we may even persuade ourselves that it would be better were the suffering removed. Thus it was with Paul, as to "the thorn in the flesh." It was not only a grievance to flesh and blood, but, as he conceived, a hindrance to his usefulness; and he longed and

* Phil. iv. 6, 7.

† 1 John i. 1—3.

‡ Eph. ii. 18.

prayed to be delivered from it—"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me."* But the Lord saw differently. Our minds, in times of tribulation, are apt to be unhinged, so that, amid overwhelming agitation and perplexity, we are completely bewildered. There is a strong conflict between inclination and the duty of submission to the will of God. Grace desires to say, "Thy will be done," but the feelings of nature choke our utterance. And so ignorant are we of what is really for our good, as to be at a loss what we should seek, lest we should seek the very thing that would injure instead of profiting us, and dishonour rather than glorify God. And as to the *principles* which ought to be in exercise in prayer,—we feel incompetent to work in ourselves the faith, and patience, and confidence, and cheerful submission with which all prayer should be offered. We "know not" how to bring these principles into exercise; while we know that God cannot be approached acceptably without them. Thus, through "infirmitiy," we are kept hesitating and doubting;—held back from the throne, or coming to it, with our lips sealed and our hearts disquieted and heavy, incapable of finding utterance and relief.

In these circumstances, the Spirit "*maketh intercession for us.*" He does this, not *directly*—but in and through the believer himself. The former is part of the official work of Jesus. He alone is our priestly Intercessor with the Father.† The Spirit "makes intercession" *in us* by inspiring us with right feelings and desires; and these, although not expressed in words, are prayer. They are the "intercession of the Spirit." The Spirit is said to "cry," what *we* cry under His influence.‡ He is denominated "the Spirit of grace and of supplications;"§ and every gracious desire—every holy longing, is of His inspiration.

It is added—"With groanings which cannot be uttered," or "with inarticulate groanings."|| It is of importance to have right conceptions of the nature of these "groanings."

* 2 Cor. xii. 8.

† Heb. vii. 25; 1 John ii. 1, 2.

‡ Comp. verse 15 of this chap. with Gal. iv. 6.

§ Zech. xii. 10.

|| στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις.

They are not to be considered as the stifled groanings of mere *natural distress*. There may be the greatest measure of these, where there is any thing but the spirit of prayer. Every man in distress longs to be free of it, and may groan and groan heavily for the deliverance. But there is no grace in this; and no need for the Spirit to produce it. The groans of creation mentioned in the preceding verses are groans *according to its nature*—longing for deliverance from its state of subjection to human depravity and alienation from its original and proper use to the glory of God. The groanings of the new creature—of the believer who “has the first-fruits of the Spirit,” are groanings not for suffering merely, but for the *cause* of suffering—for *sin*;—earnest longings after deliverance from the “law in the members that wars against the law of his mind,” and keeps him back from God, marring his freedom of intercourse with Him, and thus detaining him from the fulness of his joy.*—Their being “*unutterable*” arises from the unutterable magnitude of the objects of desire, and the earnestness of the desire arising from the conviction and feeling of this. A word of the same derivation and import is applied to the *joy* of the believer in Christ and in the hope of his gospel.† Why is the joy “unutterable?” Because the *source* of it is felt to be so. We cannot tell our joy, for we cannot tell the greatness of that which causes it. And when the believer is at a loss for words to express the joy of his heart in the contemplation of Christ as the foundation, and heaven as the object, of his hope; we may easily perceive, that his difficulty is neither more nor less than a difficulty to form a sufficiently exalted idea of the excellence of either. His joy is “unutterable,” because the object of his love and the object of his hope are “unutterable.” His heart swells in the contemplation of the glory and the loveliness of his divine Saviour, and his joy is beyond expression in having such a friend and such a stay to his consciously guilty and

* Verse 23 compared with chap. vii. 23, 24, and 2 Cor. v. 1—4.

† χαρᾶ ἀνεκλαλητῷ, in 1 Pet. i. 8.

trembling soul, and such a fountain of all spiritual supplies:—and it swells in the anticipation of the pure and perfect blessedness of the world that is before him, where all his hopes rest,—blessedness of the nature and amount of which he labours in vain to attain an adequate conception; and his joy is “unutterable” in the thought of fully experiencing what here he can so inadequately comprehend. For similar reasons the “*groanings*” are unutterable. In proportion as we rejoice in having such a Saviour and such a hope, must be our grief to feel in ourselves that which needed such a Saviour; that which is opposed to the very ends of his mediation; which brought upon him all his sufferings, and which forms the barrier between us and the perfect enjoyment of our God, and the present participation in the fulness of blessing that springs from His love. In proportion as we love Christ and long for heaven, must we feel oppressed by the weight of sin, and long for deliverance from it, and from all its deadening effects on the soul. If, then, under the afflictions of life, the believer “groans being burdened,” it is not, as in the case of others, from mere sensibility to temporal affliction; but from a deep sense of sin, in its “exceeding sinfulness,” as the *cause* of the affliction. He feels it to be “an evil thing and a bitter.” The more he feels this, the more intense are his desires and “*groanings*” after deliverance from it: and, when he contrasts the present state of sin and suffering with the glory that is to follow, the difference is so overwhelming,—the prospect in view so completely and transcendently above his most enlarged conception, that we cannot wonder at the longing being “unutterable.” Is there little to be found of such “unutterable groaning?” It is because there is so little *spirituality of mind*. Were we more “spiritually-minded,” we should better understand by experience the true force of the Apostle’s words;—words which, like some other New Testament phraseology, have almost lost their meaning amidst the carnality and earthliness of modern Christianity. Let us not wonder at the terms, and count them extravagant, and set them down in our minds in association with enthusiasm.

Rather let us examine ourselves—searching and trying the state of our own hearts, lest our profession of Christianity be but nominal, and without the depth of impression that will bear being brought to the test of the Bible standard:—and whereinsoever we are sensible of deficiency, let our fervent prayers ascend upward for those divine influences which shall “quicken us according to God’s word.”

All trials are designed to elevate our apprehensions of the sinless state of being that is before us; and to give intensity to our desires after it. This was the effect on Paul’s mind.* But we do well to exercise self-jealousy; lest we mistake the mere sensibilities of nature under suffering, for the longings of grace under sin. We by no means exclude the former; but apart from the latter, they are nothing but “what is common to man.” And if our desire of heaven is a mere desire to be freed from the sorrows of earth, it is utterly devoid of the characteristic sentiment and feeling of the renewed soul. We may be weary enough of the world, without being weary of *sin*.

As the intercession of the Spirit is *inward*, and the “groanings” are unuttered, because unutterable—can they not, therefore, be heard? Far be such a foolish, unworthy, and comfortless thought! God needs not the utterance of the lips. “He who *searcheth the heart*” knows the inmost secrets of the heart:—He “knoweth the *mind of the Spirit*.” The phrase in the Greek is the same as in verse sixth,† and it does not mean that the Father is fully acquainted with the views or sentiments of the Spirit, considered abstractly from His influence in us, simply as a person in the Godhead. The “mind of the Spirit” *is*, in this sense, the mind of the Father and of the Son; it is the one mind of the Godhead. His “knowing the mind of the Spirit” signifies his knowing the *mind which the Spirit produces in us*. He distinguishes from everything else the desires of which *the Spirit* is the Author. This is the sentiment of the psalmist when he says, “All my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not

* 2 Cor. iv. 16—18.

† φρόνημα τοῦ πνεύματος.

hid from thee." With every spiritual desire he is perfectly acquainted; and no such desire is disregarded, or without effect.

The phrase "He maketh intercession for the saints *according to the will of God*," conveys the truth that all the desires produced in the mind by the Spirit are *in harmony with* the divine will. It is impossible that the Spirit should dictate desires that are not in perfect accordance with the great principles of the revealed will of God:—for it appears to be the will of God as it regards *principles* rather than events;† His *moral* rather than His *decretive* will that is here meant.

But the words "*the will of*" are supplementary. And the translation seems to me simpler and more suited to the context without the supplement:—"And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, for *with God*‡ he intercedeth for the saints." With God he intercedes; and that Being knows every desire and every groaning of the heart in which he operates. I take this to be the meaning; and it is a meaning full of comfort. No spiritual desire, no silent breathing of the heart which the Spirit dictates, escapes the notice of Him who is the source of all blessing. He is the Hearer of prayer. He listens to the intercessions of Jesus when, in person, he pleads "at his right hand." He listens to the petitions of his people when his Spirit dictates their prayers, interceding *in* them and *for* them. How cheering this view of the Godhead, as the ONE GOD of our salvation. The Father, with the universe at his command, hearing prayer; the Son interceding in heaven and the Spirit on earth!

Another strong consolation and support under all the trials of time is contained in verse 28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." What is

* Such too appears to be the meaning in 1 John v. 14, 15.

† *κατὰ Θεὸν*. Alford, while he does not adopt this rendering of *κατὰ*, gives high authority for it—"Reiche, Meyer, Fritz, and Winer." —ED.

the object after which the believer groans? It is the full enjoyment of future glory. As afflictions “work out this glory for them,” so “all things” are here represented as “working together for good to them that love God.”*

“All things” must be understood by the connexion. The phrase evidently signifies the whole procedure of God’s providence, whether prosperous or adverse. No exception is allowed; and surely we never can wish to make any. And it is not in *future* time. It is not said, “all things *shall* work together for good to them that love God”—but “all things *work*,” are now actually working. And they “work *together*.” There is a divine adjusting and arranging of events towards the attainment of an ultimate end. It is not one thing here and another there, in the believer’s progress, that “works for good;” but the entire complex system of divine procedure towards each individual has one bearing; is all made to point to one result:—so that, were one link in the chain wanting the whole might be damaged, its influence marred, and the object frustrated. The design is “*good*.” And what can we understand by this when God is the agent, and his redeemed and adopted children the objects whom He designs to benefit? The “*good*” is their *spiritual improvement* and *final salvation*. The whole providential arrangement of God is constructed upon the principle of working out for them the purposes of his love in the mission of his Son: everything temporal being made to subserve what is spiritual and eternal. And is it not delightful to God’s children to be assured of this? that there *is* such a principle; that it is always kept in view; never in one instance set aside? A child, when smarting under the rod, is very apt at the time to forget and to discredit the design, and the kindness which seeks its attainment. But our Father in heaven is infinitely gracious: and we may be assured, no one circumstance in the arrangement of the life of any child of his family could be left out without essential detriment. He gives them, and to the close *will* give them,

* For a similar connexion compare 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

cause to say—"I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." "It has been good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." And this acknowledgment will be made in all its emphasis *at last*. There is a union of faithfulness and wisdom and love in His whole paternal administration. In the time, the manner, or the measure of his corrective inflictions He never errs; and **GOOD**—the highest and best good, is the end in them all.

It is of the first moment to observe the *character* of them, of whom these things are said—lest we be taking the comfort where there is no title. They are such as "*love God. —the called according to his purpose.*" The natural character of man is summed up in verse seventh. With this is contrasted the character of those who have received the Spirit of God. The first of his operations is, by the discoveries of divine grace in the Gospel, to implant in the room of *enmity* the opposite principle of *love*—holy love; love to God as a Father in Christ Jesus; love to Him in all his attributes—and love to Him for all his kindness and grace. This love—manifested in practical obedience*—is the distinguishing feature of all who are the "*called according to his purpose.*"

That to such "all things work together for good"—the Apostle "*knew*," and God's children all know. They know it from the faithfulness and unchangeableness of God; and from the experience and confession of the saints in every age. They know it,—for in regard to *all* God's children, there is a certain progress, closing in a certain predetermined end:—verses 29, 30. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." The ninth chapter of this Epistle is a dissertation on the subject of Election. The full treatment

* 1 John v. 3.

of that subject, therefore, we reserve till we come to it. We can only now touch on the different links of this golden chain, and point out their connexion with each other. "Whom he did *foreknow*." This foreknowledge must be something more than mere simple prescience. Otherwise it would be nothing peculiar or distinctive,—*this* being predictable alike of all things and all persons.* Nor can it be understood of the foreknowledge of their character as lovers of Himself, as the foreseen ground of His choice of them. This is to reverse the scriptural arrangement:†—where holiness is that *to* which, not *on account of* which, they are chosen. It is that foreknowledge in which God fixed his love on certain objects to be "the heirs of salvation." Knowledge, in such connexions, is not seldom used as inclusive of affectionate regard. It is much the same as the *choosing* in Eph. i. 4. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did *predestinate*." This expresses the divine determination respecting the objects of his gracious foreknowledge or electing love. And what is His determination? What is its object? It is—"that they should be conformed to the image of his Son." This conformity consists—

1. In *character*. The great principle of the conformity is that already mentioned—"them that *love God*." This, as a principle, includes all holiness of heart and life. It was the great principle of the character of the blessed "Son of man" and "Son of God." His love to the Father that sent him was perfect in purity and in degree, and it appeared in the full perfection of holy obedience and submission.‡ This image is in fact the same as that in which man was originally created—the image of God:—

2. In *present sufferings*:—Some conceive this to be the chief if not the only thing meant; because suffering is the subject of the preceding context. Far from thinking this, I should be disposed even to doubt of their being at all intended. I would regard the sufferings as not properly a part of conformity to the *image* of Christ, but conformity to him in *condition*; and as a part of the *means* by which

* Acts xv. 18. † Comp. Eph. i. 4. ‡ Heb. vii. 26, 27: Acts iii. 14.

He brings about the conformity to his image. It is a truth, however, that they *are* conformed to Christ in suffering; and that if they "suffer they shall also reign with him." Hence I notice—

3. *External corporeal glory*—to be bestowed hereafter at "the resurrection of the just."* The "conformity" is not restricted to this life, but embraces the future, which is to be the perfection of what is begun in the present—"It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."†

Thus Christ becomes "*the first-born among many brethren.*" In his humiliation he is represented as "made like unto his brethren" whom he humbled himself to redeem.‡ But when he had thus been conformed to them in humiliation—God "raised him from the dead and gave him glory," "setting him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." In doing so he "made him his first-born."§ His being the *first-born* implies his having brethren:—and to him in his state of glorious exaltation in this capacity, all his brethren are to be conformed. The *right* is his, and he gives to his brethren a share with him in his glory and blessedness. The Apostle continues—"Moreover whom he did pre-destinate, them he also *called.*"|| The calling is the following up of the purpose; and so are the other particulars. "Whom he called, he *justified.*" Justification follows upon calling. The instant a sinner is called out of darkness into marvellous light, he is justified—and justified by faith, he "has peace with God." "And whom he justified, he *glorified.*" This was partially true in fact—the spirits of many having actually been glorified before the Apostle Paul wrote—and of *two* even the bodies. But the past tense is used to express the *certain and inseparable connexion* between the different progressive steps in the enumeration. The connexion is such, that the first and last may be unhesitatingly joined—

* Phil. iii. 21: 1 Cor. xv. 49. † 1 John iii. 2. ‡ Heb. ii. 16, 17.

§ Comp. Psa. lxxxix. 27. with Col. i. 18: Rev. i. 5.

|| Rom. i. 6, 7: 1 Cor. i. 24: Heb. ix. 15: 2 Tim. i. 9.

“Whom he *foreknew*, them he also *glorified*.” They are brought together by the intermediate steps. There are none, that is, who are foreknown, in whom any of the subsequent particulars fail to follow. All who are foreknown are pre-destinated to conformity to Christ; all who are predestinated are called; all who are called are justified; all who are justified are glorified; therefore—all who are foreknown are ultimately glorified.

Let us learn from the passage,

1. *Gratitude to the Divine Spirit.* We owe much—in one sense we owe everything, to the Spirit’s influences. To Him we owe our regeneration. To Him we owe our perseverance in faith and holiness. To Him we owe all the present joys and all the future hopes, as they exist and are experienced in our hearts, of God’s salvation. The spiritual life in its first elements, and in all its variety of subsequent exercises and enjoyments, is His work. He commences it. He maintains, and forwards, and perfects it. We are too apt to confine our gratitude to the Father and the Son; probably from two causes:—the work of Christ, in assuming our nature, and suffering and dying for us, and as commissioned by the Father so to do, has in it something more external and palpable, something on which the mind can more readily realize to its conceptions, than the work of the Spirit, which, in as far as regards the personal application of that work, is inward, and spiritual; imperceptible except in its effects, and frequently undistinguishable in our consciousness from the ordinary operations of mind. This is the case with the manner in which He helps our infirmities in prayer, and with all his other operations in the soul. We see it not, we hear it not. It does not even in imagination embody itself to any of our senses: and even when most conscious of the effect, we are not sensible of the influence which produces it. And moreover, we justly regard the Spirit as the gift of the Father and the Son, and are in danger of forgetting the personality and the perfect voluntariness of the Spirit himself.

* Luke xi. 9—13.

in the whole of *his* part in the work of our redemption. It is to the work of Christ we are instructed to look, for a sense of pardon, for peace and hope and joy and all spiritual excitement: and, while *that* is the object of our contemplation, we are in danger of forgetting the necessity of the Spirit's influence to our deriving from it any saving benefit. The Father sent and gave the Son: the Son came and gave himself: the Spirit, though sent by the Father and the Son, performs his part, as regenerator and sanctifier, with the same personal delight and satisfaction. Let us cherish gratitude to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—ONE GOD.

2. If the aids of the Spirit are so essential, it is cheering to be assured of their perfect unlimited freeness to all who ask them.* In every command, involving spiritual duty to which we feel ourselves incompetent, there is involved a promise of the needed influence. It is ours—as much ours as if we had it within ourselves and at our own disposal—for the fulfilment of that command.

3. Let us be on our guard against resting a confident expectation of our prayers being answered in a certain way on our particular feelings and frames of mind in the exercise.—A strong impulse of longing desire is felt; a confident certainty of events turning out in a certain way is impressed unaccountably on the mind; or we experience a great deal of fervour and enlargement of heart in the exercise: and we conclude accordingly. But we may often be wrong. It is a matter in which there are many sources of self-deception. We can form no accurate idea of the way in which of old God was wont to communicate to the mind an absolutely certain impression of His will and intentions. We have no experience of it. And the states of mind on which the confidence I have alluded to is founded, may have various sources. They depend much on the particular constitution of the mind; on the light in which the object happens at the time to be contemplated; on the present state of the animal spirits,—the enlargement and freedom arising from which may be mistaken for the influences of the Spirit. There is peril in thus anticipating answers to prayer from frames and impres-

sions. It unsettles the mind between the extremes of raptures and dejections—and, being liable to frequent mistakes and disappointments, it tends, when these are experienced, to shake the mind's confidence in the providence and the love of God. Our prayers should be offered with faith in the Redeemer's name; with confidence in the promises of God; and with resigned submission to His will. Such prayers are always listened to, and always answered, though not in every case according to the *letter* of the petition. If he does not remove our trial, he will do what is still better,—give us grace to bear and to improve it; so that it may have its place amongst the “all things that work together for good to them that love God.”

LECTURE XXXVIII.

ROMANS VIII. 31—39.

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

A MOST animated and triumphant close to the Apostle’s illustration of the great doctrines of grace, and of the character and privileges of the children of God!—His heart is so full of the glory of his subject, that he seems as if at a loss for expressions to convey the emotions of his own mind to the minds of others:—“*What shall we then say to these things?*” Having enumerated the leading privileges of God’s chosen, beginning with His everlasting purpose, and ending with their admission to glory—what more was there that he could add?—How vast the magnitude, how incalculable the value of these blessings!—To be foreknown of God, as the objects of His peculiar love and gracious choice! to be predestinated by the purpose of that love to the high character of conformity

to the image of His Son!—to be the brethren of Immanuel, “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ!”—called out of the world in pursuance of the divine designs of mercy, into the kingdom and fellowship of the Redeemer!—freely justified from all guilt by the Supreme Judge, and accepted of Him in the Beloved!—and finally elevated to all the glory of heaven, to all the fulness of its everlasting joys!—and the possession of that inheritance guaranteed here by “the earnest of the Spirit,” confirming and sealing the blessed hope!—“What shall we say to these things?” What conclusion shall we draw from this review? Do not our hearts burn with grateful love to the divine Author of all this blessedness? and, while they sink in conscious shame under an overpowering sense of our own unworthiness; do they not, at the same time, rise to all the elevation of holy confidence? and may we not say, in the language of triumph, bidding defiance to every enemy of every kind, that would disturb our peace, or arrest us in our progress to glory—“*If God be for us, who can be against us?*”

Such is the *general inference* which is amplified in the subsequent verses. The general spirit of it is plain:—Who will oppose his power or his malicious art to the might and wisdom of the Lord of Hosts? What are all the combined resolutions and efforts of creatures against the will and arm of the Creator? Who shall curse whom God hath blessed? Who shall injure whom God defends? Who shall destroy whom God determines to save?—The language does not mean that the people of God were to have no enemies; none who would attempt to injure them; none who would seek their destruction. They have enemies—many, powerful, malignant enemies—but, God being on their side, who can ever be successful against them?—“Whom he justifies, them he also glorifies.” Who shall frustrate this determination? Who shall shut the gates of heaven against those for whom the hand of God has thrown them open? He shuts, and none can open: He opens, and none can shut. It may be “through much tribulation;” but the “heirs of salvation shall enter the kingdom:”—it may be “through fire

and through water," but He will "bring them to the wealthy place"—to the land of promise, the heavenly country. The language of the Apostle is, in the burden of it, the same with that put by the Spirit into the mouth of the Church in every age:—"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy one of Israel in the midst of thee." "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God; which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is; which keepeth truth for ever."*

The Apostle proceeds, in the same strain, to enlarge. From the evidence which God has given of love to His people, he first draws the cheering inference of their security for every blessing—verse 32. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

This is not the utterance of a mere enthusiastic impression. It is an argument of irresistible conclusiveness. We cannot understand and admit the premises, without instantly admitting the consequence. The mode of *question* which is employed expresses, with much spirit and force, the contradictoriness and impossibility involved in the supposition of God's acting otherwise. "He spared not his own Son," the object of His infinite and everlasting love. He did not *withhold* him—but "delivered him up"—delivered him to all the inconceivable sufferings of his state of humiliation. He "sent him into the world" "in the likeness of sinful flesh." He put into his hand the cup of bitterness, brimful of the curse due for our sins. He abated not one drop of the wormwood and the gall which it was necessary it should contain;—"it pleased the Lord to bruise him and to put him to grief." This is "God's *UNSPECAKABLE GIFT.*" And the conclusion drawn from it by the Apostle may be considered as resting on *two principles*:—it

* Psa. xlvi. 11; Isa. xii. 2, 6; Psa. clxvi. 5, 6.

may be deduced from the *magnitude* of the gift itself, and from the *purpose* of its bestowment. He has given his own Son; and he has given him for our salvation. He who has bestowed the greater, will not withhold the less:—and He who has bestowed the greatest of all gifts for a specific end, will not allow that end to be frustrated for want of any of those supplies of grace, or those arrangements of providence that are needful for its final attainment.—He “delivered him up for *us all*.” That there is a sense in which God gave his Son, and in which the Son gave himself, for *all* men, for the world, for the whole world—I dare not doubt, because the word of God has said it, in terms which cannot be restricted without being tortured. There was an infinite sufficiency in the atonement. It was a manifestation of God’s love to the world—to mankind—to our fallen race; its provisions are alike suited for all, and to all its blessings are alike free. But still it is only “whosoever believeth in him that shall have everlasting life;” and that such believe in him in fulfilment of a predetermining purpose of God, the whole preceding context, as well as many other parts of the Bible, clearly show. That such are meant here is very manifest. The personal pronoun has the same reference for many verses preceding:*

and the reference is further confirmed by all that follows.†

If no consideration, then, of the demerit and unworthiness of the objects of His love, and no consideration in connexion with this, of the nature and the preciousness to Him of the gift itself, induced God to “spare his Son” and to withhold him from humiliation and suffering; what weight can these or any other considerations have in regard to any gifts of inferior value, and especially in regard to any communications needful for the final attainment of the great end of his Son’s mediation? If *He* was given to save, what can consistently be withheld that is required for the securing and perfecting of the gracious end? How can *He* “who spared not his own Son” allow the purpose for which *He* gave him

* Verses 23—32.

† Verses 33—39.

to fail, for want of any supplies, of any kind which the case demands? Will He spare anything else, when He has not spared HIM? This were to suppose God to contradict himself. He will not withhold the future glory—the incorruptible inheritance—the fulness of joy; nor will he withhold what may be needful to bring to the possession of it. Indeed in the very bestowment of his Son, (when Christ becomes *ours* by faith in his name,) there is virtually included the bestowment of every blessing of salvation—grace here—glory hereafter.

And if the believer is warranted to draw the inference as to these blessings, can we allow ourselves to hesitate one moment in applying the principle to the things of time—the necessities and the comforts of the present life? Nothing surely could be more unreasonable. And yet, do not we sometimes see believers, who profess, and give evidence otherwise of the sincerity of their profession, to trust in God with undoubting confidence for the everlasting salvation which the Gospel promises, yet discovering timid and perplexing solicitude, and tossed to and fro in the agitation of their minds with doubts and apprehensions as to present temporal supplies! Surely, brethren, the declaration, so strongly made in this verse, ought to banish from our minds all such solicitudes, and to establish them in “perfect peace.” In bestowing his own Son, and salvation in his name, God, almighty, all-wise, and all-gracious, has pledged himself to *do us good*; to do nothing to us incompatible with the love displayed in the gift of his Son. He gave his Son in order to our deliverance from sin, itself the worst of evils, and from all its penal consequences in the world to come. Anything whatever, that tended to mar our enjoyment of this salvation in its present blessings, or to retard our progress towards its perfection, would not be *good* but *evil*. This is the principle by which every truly spiritual mind will form its estimate of evil and good. The prosperity of life, and the uniform gratification of the wishes of our hearts as to the things of this world, has many a time operated most injuriously to the soul’s progress in spirituality and meekness.

for heaven,—rendering the prosperous believer languid and inconstant in “working out his own salvation;” inducing a spiritual apathy; secularizing the desires and affections; drawing them down to the earth, and fastening them there; it may be with fetters of gold—but no matter whether of gold or of iron, if they keep the heart down and prevent it from aspiring heavenward. Every believer who feels as he ought the incomparably superior value of the blessings of God’s salvation will reckon the bestowment of the wealth of the world, when such is its effect, a curse instead of a blessing; and altogether inconsistent with the love which has the best interests of its objects at heart, and with the gracious purpose for which God “spared not his own Son.” And well may every believer rejoice in the ample encouragement this verse holds out to expect with assured confidence every good thing from the God of his salvation. Here he has a pledge which may surely keep his mind settled and satisfied. What can *He* withhold from him, who has not withheld his own Son? Well may we, with this encouragement, “open our mouth wide,” assured that He will “fill it.” In our own name we can obtain nothing—however small; but in the name of Jesus, nothing we ask, however great, that is in harmony with God’s purposes of love, can be withheld from us!

The Apostle proceeds to apply the principles of his reasoning to the blessing of *justification*—verses 33, 34. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”

There are two modes of translating these verses. The first is that of the received English version—“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? *It is God that justifieth.*”

According to this translation, the negative answers to the questions “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?” “Who is he that condemneth?” are made to depend upon the supreme authority of Him by whom the sentence

of acquittal is pronounced. From Divine authority there can be no appeal. If, therefore, it be God that justifies, what charge can be made to lie against any sinner He thus acquits from the entire indictment of all his trespasses?—And again, upon the divine excellence and sufficiency of the mediatorial work of the Redeemer: “Who is he that condemneth?” *since* “It is CHRIST that died, yea rather that is risen again.” Who can undo or render unavailing what has been effected by *such* a Mediator?—the emphasis being thus upon *Christ*, and the scripture views of his person and character being, though not expressed, tacitly implied.

There is another form of rendering, which appears to me still more literal and yet more spirited, bringing out a similar sentiment, but with still livelier effect:—“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? God who justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? Christ who died, yea rather, that is risen again?” The sentiment thus expressed is, first, the self-evident one, that the God who justifies his people will not bring charges against them; and that Christ who died to atone for their sins, and lives to intercede for their salvation, will not condemn them in the judgment:—and then, the inference, strongly implied in the interrogatory form of the statement, that, since it is impossible that *God* should charge with their guilt those whom He justifies, or that Christ should pass sentence of condemnation on those whom He died to save—*there is no other* by whom such charge can be brought, by whom such sentence can be passed. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of *God’s elect?*”—of those whom He has foreknown and predestinated, and called, and justified, and determined to glorify—whom He hath “chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth?” Who shall institute and plead a successful prosecution against them? Who shall bring and establish such an impeachment against them, as shall lay them under the guilt and damning power of their sins, and shut them out from the glory which God bestows on all whom He justifies?—Shall God himself?—the very God that justifieth? That cannot be. And if the Supreme Ruler

and Judge himself does not bring a charge, who shall presume to inculpate them? If *He* pronounces a sentence of acquittal, who is there in heaven, earth, or hell that can succeed in reversing it? Many things may truly and justly be laid to their charge. They are sinners. In many things they offend. In every thing they fail. The Law charges them; Satan charges them; the world charges them; their own consciences charge them: their language when they speak of themselves is—"If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"* "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified."† "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"—But the ground on which they expect final acceptance, and on which they enjoy a present sense of pardoning mercy, is not their own character. As *believing* sinners, they are "justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The righteousness on the ground of which they are accepted with God is the perfect righteousness of God's Son; and no one can shake the validity of their acquittal, or set aside their plea, unless he can succeed in proving sin against the Holy One and the Just.—"Who is he that condemneth?" "Christ who died?" *That* can never be. He died for their sins. He "put their sins away by the sacrifice of himself." And his own assurance is, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation."‡ And if He who died for them can never condemn them for the very sins which his blood covers to all who believe in him: since Christ and the Father are one, and there is a perfect harmony in their purposes and decisions, the same conclusion follows as before:—there is no existing authority that can set aside the virtue of the Saviour's atonement, and by condemning those who believe in him, pronounce him to have "died in vain."

Mark the various securities of his pardon which the believer is represented as possessing—"Christ died, yea rather

* Psal. cxxx. 3.

† Psal. cxliii. 2.

‡ John v. 24.

is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Here is the *full* ground, in all its particulars, of the believer's acceptance and hope towards God. It consists of three things—What Jesus has done in obedience to the Father;—What the Father has done in reward of Christ's obedience unto death, and in testimony of his satisfaction in him;—and what Christ is now doing in his state of exaltation at the Father's right hand: this last dividing itself into two parts—the power with which he is invested, and the priestly intercession which he carries on with God:—the DEATH, the RESURRECTION, the REIGN, and the INTERCESSION of Jesus. This is the believer's list of securities. We can merely touch upon them.

"*It is Christ that died.*"—He who died, died for sin. And his divine dignity rendered his atoning death infinitely available. His death includes *all* his sufferings; for as "*holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,*" he could suffer nothing on his own account. All was substitutionary and vicarious. And it is their atoning character that renders all the sufferings he endured so peculiarly interesting to us. And this too gives its interest to the next particular,—"yea rather, *who is risen again.*" There may be death without subsequent resurrection: there can be no resurrection without previous death; and it is the nature and end of the death that gives importance to the resurrection. When Jesus died, the hopes of his disciples were "*as the giving up of the ghost.*" They "*wept and lamented,*" while the world triumphed. Their joy was laid with him in the tomb. But as *He* was not to remain there, neither was their joy. He revived; and their hopes revived with him. They were "*sorrowful,*" but their "*sorrow was turned into joy.*" They "*saw him again, and their hearts rejoiced*"—with a joy which "*no man could take from them.*" And they knew the full extent of the ground of their joy, when they came fully to understand the nature of his death, and the end which his resurrection answered in connexion with it. His death had been of no avail, if God had not "*set to his seal*" to its atoning ef-

ficacy by raising him up from the dead.* Well then might the Apostle add—"Yea rather, that is RISEN AGAIN!" The language is quite similar in the spirit of it to that used by the Apostle before, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being now reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."† The only seeming difference is, that there it is not the *resurrection* of Christ only that is spoken of, but his *life*. But so we may understand the case to stand *here*. For it follows—"Who is even at the right hand of God." This is an additional security. Jesus was exalted *in reward* of his finished work. And as he possesses *this part* of his stipulated reward, it gives assurance of his ultimately obtaining *the whole*. Now one essential part of this reward, is the final salvation of all who are given to him of the Father.‡ We may be sure that to its utmost extent this shall be accomplished. His exaltation is the pledge of it. Further, he is gone to heaven as our *forerunner*.§ In this capacity he has taken possession of the inheritance in his people's behalf; and this secures their attainment of it; so that they are represented as if already put in possession themselves.|| Still further; in his exaltation Jesus is invested with all power; in the exercise of which he makes every act of his administration subserve the attainment of the ends of his death: and while this power is in his hands, he will never suffer to perish, to become a prey to their enemies, any of the objects of his redeeming love.

Then, last of all, we have the joyful declaration—"Who also maketh intercession for us." Not that there is need for urgency of solicitation to induce the Father to bestow blessing: of this the Saviour's own words forbid the supposition. "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed

* 1 Cor. xv. 17.

§ Heb. vi. 19, 20.

† Rom. v. 9, 10.

|| Eph. ii. 5.

‡ Isa. liii. 10, 11.

that I came out from God.”* But the intercession of Christ is of a piece with all the rest of the scheme. It keeps up the connexion between the blessings of salvation being *from God*, and their being *for Christ's sake*. He pleads for his people's *forgiveness* ;† for the supply of the Spirit ;‡ for the preservation of his people by his Father's power ;§ for their final glory and blessedness with himself.|| As the ground of his intercession he pleads his own work, and the faithfulness of the Father to the terms with himself of the everlasting covenant. His intercession is always prevalent. That is as true in heaven as it was when he said it on earth—“I know that thou hearest me *always*.” And his intercession is unceasing. He does not, like the High priest under the law, come once a-year before the mercy-seat within the veil, and then retire till the next day of atonement comes round. He is always in the Holy place—ever living, and “ever appearing in the presence of God for us.”¶

“What shall we then say to these things?” As, in defiance of every opposing power, we say, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” So, in defiance of every difficulty, and trial, and hardship, and danger, we may add (vers. 35—37.) “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

The “*love of Christ*” is clearly Christ's love *to us*,** manifested in what he has done for us. The thirty-sixth verse parenthetically cited, is from Psa. xliv. 22.—It were quite a deviation from the spirit of Paul's animated and animating discourse, to pause to inquire, whether it be only an accommodation of appropriate terms, or whether their direct pro-

* John xvi. 26, 27.

† 1 John ii. 1, 2.

‡ John xiv. 16, 17.

§ John xvii. 11.

|| John xvii. 24.

¶ Heb. vii. 25.

** “This meaning, as maintained by Beza, Grot., Est., al., Tholuck, Reiche, Meyer, De Witte, appears to me the only tenable sense of the words.” Alford.—ED.

phetic reference was to the Apostles and first heralds of the Cross, and early Christians.—“*Killed all the day long*” means incessantly exposed to deadly perils—“*dying daily*”—“*in deaths oft*”—and “*appointed to death*” like sheep marked out “*for the slaughter*.” We dwell not on the particulars of the enumeration. They require no explanation. The language may be regarded as applying to everything that Christians can ever be called to endure for the sake of Jesus. The evils enumerated, it is very, obvious, though represented as having an influence that *tends* to separate us from Christ’s love, cannot have this influence by any possibility on the mind of Jesus himself. They are considerations of which the influence can only be felt *by us*. Their tendency is to tempt us to apostatize from him, and so to forfeit his love:—and the language is that of holy resolution in union with humble dependence on divine aid. Who shall prevail with us to renounce the love of Christ as our portion? Who shall succeed in alienating our hearts from that divine Saviour who died and rose and reigns and intercedes for us? and “*whose love is better than life?*”—“*Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*”—Were we left to ourselves, these accumulated evils would infallibly produce the effect. We should give way to their tempting and seducing or rather their intimidating power. But—“*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*” He who has set his love upon us must himself keep us in the enjoyment of his love. With him is “*the residue of the Spirit*,” and by the Spirit’s communications to our souls he animates and strengthens us to bear trials, to “*resist even unto blood, striving against sin.*”—He assures us, “*My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*”* “*My grace is sufficient for thee.*”† Thus by his imparted spiritual aids, they “*fight the good fight of faith*” and are made “*more than conquerors.*” They do not barely gain the day, the victory lying on their side and no more: but are honoured in the end with a glorious triumph.‡

* John x. 28.

† 2 Cor. xii. 9.

‡ Rev. iii. 2.

The closing verses are in the same elevated strain—“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—“*Neither death nor life*”—the natural dread of death, in any of the shocking and appalling forms in which it may threaten us:—nor the desire and hope of life, even in its most alluring and promising aspects, set before us as the tempting price of our denying the Lord that bought us:—

“*Nor angels.*” This cannot signify the *good* angels. They are all “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation.” but evil angels—the “rulers of the darkness of this world”—of whose existence, apostasy, numbers, malignity, occupations, and powers of mischief, the word of God informs us—Apollyon, the chief, with all his infernal agents, employing their utmost resources of power and craft for our ruin:—

“*Nor principalities nor powers.*” Perhaps is meant the different orders of evil spirits; for these designations *seem* to be applied to them by Peter when he says—“Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.”* But this is not *certain*. We are *sure*, however, of the use of these titles in application to the princes of this world,† and understanding them thus here, of the “kings of the earth who set themselves, and the rulers who take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed,” renders the enumeration more complete;—neither devils, nor men; nor men, armed with the full plenitude of earthly power, and instigated by the malignant inspiration of the wicked One:—

“*Nor things present, nor things to come:*”—present circumstances, however severely trying; or future, however much their trying severity might increase. But the terms are quite *general*; and may be applied to what tempts by

* 1 Pet. iii. 22.

† Tit. ii. 1.

enticement as well as by intimidation;—neither the present nor the future frowns and threatenings and alarms of the world; nor its present or future smiles, caresses, and promises;—“things present,” whatever be the existing forms of temptation they involve, nor “things to come,” however much these forms of temptations may augment:—

“*Nor height nor depth:*”—elevation or depression in their condition—exaltation or humiliation—the height of honour and prosperity (should they be raised to so unwonted a temptation) with all its beguiling, elating, intoxicating influence; nor the depth of degradation, contempt, and adversity, (their much more usual lot) with all that is forbidding and repulsive in them to the feelings of nature;—neither their being “had in reputation among all the people,” nor their being “counted as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things:”—

“*Nor any other creature:*”—that is, any thing else, of what kind soever, in the creation of God, that may be conceived to have in it any power of temptation;—nothing now existing, or that may hereafter come into being:—

None of these things “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—The “love of Christ” and the “love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,” are phrases of the same amount. In the objects of their love, Christ and the Father are one.—Mark the ground of the Apostle’s persuasion—included in these words—“*which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”—Every one who believes in Christ is an object of the love of God in Him: and the persuasion rests on the immutable perpetuity of the Father’s love to his Son. In his beloved Son, the Father is for ever well-pleased: and it is *in him* that He beholds and delights in his people. His love to *them* is thus coeval with his love to *Him*—“from everlasting, and to everlasting.” Till God the Father ceases to love his own Son; till He becomes dissatisfied with his finished work of salvation,—He cannot cease to love his people. They are associated in His heart with Christ, and nothing can disunite them.—And this delight of God in his Son gives his people the assurance

of all spiritual supplies in all the varying circumstances of need in which they can be placed; and engages on their behalf all the perfections of the divine character, especially the divine *power*; which becomes the handmaid of His love, waiting its commands, and carrying into sure and constant effect all its intimations. If the love of God be *toward* us, the power of God is *with* us, to keep us “through faith unto salvation;” attaching us to Himself by an invincible energy, in despite of all the enumerated disuniting influences.

In conclusion, observe,—

1. The strong confidence expressed in verse thirty-first is applicable, in its full force, to the cause and church of God at large in this its militant and suffering state. Both by violence and by undermining subtilty her interests have all along been opposed: but we may say boldly to all its enemies—This work is of God; ye cannot overthrow it. “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.” God has said to her—and up to this hour He has kept his word—“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.”* “Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”† The church is founded on a rock by divine hands; and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

2. What motives are here to the love of Christ and of God! Who can estimate the value of the blessings that are bestowed by divine love upon us? And who then can cal-

* Isa. xliii. 2, 3.

† Isa. liv. 15—17.

culate the amount of gratitude due from us to God!—O how awfully insensible men are both to the preciousness of the blessings and the consequent amount of the obligation! Let believers bless God, that He has in any measure awakened them to spiritual sensibility; and given them to know and to feel, in their own happy experience, the excellence of the blessings of his salvation. The more they *do* experience of this, they will say with the greater fervour of emotion—“What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?” “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.” “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!”

When we think of the everlasting love of God, in all its wonderful manifestations towards the utterly worthless, our language will be that of John—“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!”* and let us never forget, “*This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.*”

3. What a source is here of constant peace and spiritual joy—joy unspeakable! There is no incongruity between the full triumph of Christian joy uttered in this animated passage, and a deep and even burdening and distressing sense of indwelling sin. It was but a little before we found the Apostle exclaiming, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Think you this was only a temporary burst of depressed feeling—of which, when he came to the close of the present chapter, he had got the better; and that he would now be in no condition of mind to bemoan himself as before? This were a great mistake. Paul’s feelings were not thus mere transitions from temporary depressions to equally temporary ecstasies. Instead of ceasing to express himself as he does before—he would repeat it more earnestly than ever. In proportion as his heart was full, in

* 1 John iii. 1.

contemplating the amount of the blessings arising from the “love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,” would he feel and bewail the existence of whatever interfered with and hindered his full and perfect enjoyment of it. The two feelings of a deep and humbling sense of corruption and a lively and assured joy of hope in the divine promises, are perfectly compatible: and *we* as well as the Apostle may say at once, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”—and, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*—Let none say, as many are apt to say—Ah! it is not every one that can attain to the same triumphant confidence with such a man as Paul! Remember the Apostle had no sources of peace and joy and hope for himself but those which he laid open to others. He tells us of *his own* joy; but he expresses it in terms which evidently show he meant other believers to go along with him in it. It was not as an *Apostle* but as a *fellow-sinner* believing in Christ that he utters this fulness of joy. It *may* and *ought* to be ours.—And *if ours*, what a relish of all prosperity, what a sweetener of all adversity! Surely, if there is a happy creature existing on earth, it must be the man who can feel and speak thus!

4. This joy must be practical. The language before us is not the language of a mere spiritual voluptuary,—of one who languished away his time in the luxury of sentimental feeling. No. It is the language of one of the most active and indefatigable of Christ’s servants. And he never enjoyed the plenitude of spiritual comfort and hope and happiness so much as when he was most busily engaged in the holy and divine cause to which he had consecrated his life. His own soul’s triumphant joys were liveliest when he was most active and successful in his work; and his joy had a

* Chap. vii. 24; viii. 38, 39.

reciprocal influence on his activity. The joy of the Lord was his strength.

Sinner, careless sinner, there is a reverse of the question "If God be for us, who can be against us?" as true as the question itself—"If God be *against us*, who can be *for us*?" Who shall condemn whom God justifies? but—Who shall justify whom God condemns?—You have no interest in the Saviour's blood and intercession. And if the only Saviour disowns you, who—O who is to save you?—But the exalted Redeemer stands ready to receive you. He sets before you free and full forgiveness of all your guilt: he offers you his love. He opens to you the gate of heaven, and points you to the way. His are the only satisfying and the only permanent joys. O what are all the transitory pleasures of time and sense to the fulness of joy that is here! COME TO JESUS; and all is yours—yours in time; yours for eternity!

LECTURE XXXIX.

ROMANS IX. 1—5.

“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

THE Jews were jealous, in a high degree, of their honour as the peculiar people of God. The very suggestion of their being rejected, and of others inheriting the blessings which they had deemed by an indefeasible right their own, was gall and wormwood to their proud spirits. The doctrine that Jesus of Nazareth was *the Christ* they held in detestation, because it mortified their vain imaginations, disappointed their worldly hopes, and involved them, on account of their rejection of him, in the threatened judgments of God. In this state of mind they regarded with a virulent antipathy all who preached Jesus as the Christ. They had hated himself, and they hated *them*. And of all the objects of their animosity no one was obnoxious to so large a measure of it as Paul. He had been a fiery and zealous partisan on their own side; and he was now not only an apostate from their cause, but a “ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes”—not merely an Apostle, but in a special manner the Apostle of the Gentiles. They treated him accordingly. Wherever he went, he was persecuted by them with relent-

less fury. Their temper of mind, whenever it uttered itself, was—"Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live."

Feeling in this manner towards *him*, and little knowing the generous spirit of the Gospel, they concluded, as a matter of course, that he would have no good-will to *them*, but must hate them in return, and cherish towards them a burning resentment. He was now about to declare truths which to his unbelieving countrymen could not fail to be exceedingly unpalatable. For the sake of such of them as might see this Epistle or hear its contents, it was very desirable that he should remove this prepossession,—that he might win his way to their hearts, and obtain a favourable attention to the truth. The same thing was needful also for the confirmation of his believing brethren, that their minds might not be shaken by what he was about to write. He begins, accordingly, this part of his letter with a solemn asseveration of his affectionate attachment to his countrymen and earnest desire for their good.

The nature of the case demanded such an asseveration. Considering the ordinary resentful principles of human nature, the declaration would be hard of belief:—what he was about to say was not good but evil—regarding the casting-off of the unbelieving Jews, and the wrath which was about to fall upon them. Truths so alarming required to be declared with all tenderness. Anything that could be construed into the contrary would have the appearance of what was as far as possible from his heart—of glorying over them—exulting in the divine vengeance on his persecutors. And any impression of this kind would necessarily hinder what he was especially solicitous to promote, the saving influence of the Gospel upon their hearts:—he was anxious to satisfy them that when he spoke of divine judgments it was for their good; to induce them to flee from the coming wrath to the only refuge.

Though the Apostle is proceeding to a new subject, yet the connexion in which the appeal occurs is remarkable. He

had alluded to his persecutions.* He had at the same time triumphed in the sources of his security.† In these circumstances, he envied not his persecutors. He felt himself elevated above all their wrongs; and in the full enjoyment and anticipation of the love of God as the portion of his own inheritance and cup, his affectionate spirit melts into tender pity for them, and ardent longings for their salvation. He delivers his assurance of interest in them in terms which cannot be consistently explained on any other principle than the deity both of Christ and of the Holy Spirit:—"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost." In other passages of a similar kind, *God* and *the Father* are appealed to. Here, the appeal is evidently to *Christ* and to *the Holy Spirit*. "*In Christ*" is equivalent to "*by Christ*"—in the sight of Christ—Christ being my witness, and as I value the regard of that divine Lord in whom alone I expect salvation. "*In the Holy Ghost*" is of similar import. His conscience bore testimony to his sincerity: and, speaking under the influence of the divine Spirit, he lays his hand upon his heart, and takes that Spirit, the Spirit that was presiding over his mind while he wrote, the Spirit of holiness and of truth, to witness the "simplicity and godly sincerity" with which he makes the declaration that follows. The imperative prescription of the Jewish law as to oaths was—"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and shalt swear by his name."‡ In the form of solemn oath before us, the Apostle proceeds upon the assumption of the divine knowledge and the divine authority and power of those Names which he calls to witness. An oath is an act of religious worship, in which God is invoked, in the way of appeal, as the searcher of hearts and the avenger of falsehood. It involves an admission of the omniscience and omnipotence of Him to whom the appeal is made. The occasion was important and solemn; and the end in the Apostle's view was one of the very highest moment. All lightness was far from his mind. His heart

* Chap. viii. 35—37.

† Verses 38, 39.

‡ Deut. vi. 13.

was full. His whole soul was in this grave, and earnest, and fond, and devout asseveration. And *what is it?*—“That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed (anathema) from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” Few texts have occasioned more critical discussion—and few, as has long seemed to me, with less reason: though, if we understand the third verse as the declaration of his *present state of mind*, the difficulty is very great.

So understanding it, some have considered the word *anathema* as referring only to *excommunication*—separation from the communion of Christ’s mystical body. But this does not seem to come up at all to the strong import of the expression “accursed *from Christ*”—from Christ himself,* not merely from the present enjoyment of the privileges of his church.

Others translate—“accursed *after the manner or the example of Christ*,” that is, he could have submitted to suffer the same accursed death for them that Christ suffered. In support of this 2 Tim. i. 3. is quoted.† But every considerate Greek scholar will perceive, that though *correspondence in manner* may be inferentially implied, it is not what is directly expressed. *That* evidently is—*traditionally* from my forefathers. The preposition signifies not imitation of the example, but the *succession of tradition*.

Another view supposes Paul to express his willingness that Christ by calling him should make him an “anathema” *for his countrymen*,—to bear, in their room, and to have concentrated, were it possible, in his own person, all the calamities to which, by the curse of God on account of their unbelief and wickedness, they were devoted.

The sense of the word *anathema* in Paul’s writings should be attended to. He says, for example, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

* “No other meaning will satisfy the plain sense of the words.”
Alford.—ED.

† Χάρειν ἔχω τῷ Θεῷ, οὐ λατερίνῳ ἀπὸ προγόνων, κ. τ. λ.

As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."* And again—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema."† It should be understood in the same amount of meaning here. Some, accordingly, so understand it; but they are obliged to do for the Apostle what the Apostle does not do for himself—namely, throw in a conditional and qualifying expression—"if it were lawful to form such a wish!" But not only is this insinuating that the Apostle has used terms, even under the dictation of the Spirit, that are in themselves unwarrantable and require a kind of apologetic explanation;—it seems to me unwarrantable to conceive of him as making the very *supposition* of such a thing. For this view of the expression would imply willingness not only to prefer the welfare of his brethren to his own, but to prefer it even to the love and favour and blessing of Christ. This would be not only loving them better than himself; it would be loving them better than his Lord and Saviour. If the expression *is* to be understood as a wish, we should certainly suppose the Apostle sincere to the full extent of its meaning. But this, in the present view of it, is quite impossible. The wish is not only unlawful; but were it lawful, it could not for a moment be formed in any believer's mind.

As to its being merely a *very strong expression*, not intended to be strictly analysed or literally interpreted,—this appears to me quite inconsistent with the exceedingly solemn manner in which it is introduced. The words of such an asseveration must be considered as clear and well-defined.

The more I consider the passage, I am the more satisfied that the first part of the third verse should be rendered in the past time, and thrown into a parenthesis—"For I myself wished to be accursed from Christ."‡ The considera-

* Gal. i. 8. 9.

† 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

‡ λύπη μοι ἐστὶ μεγάλη, καὶ ἀδιάλειπτος ὁδόνη τῆς καρδίας μου (πάχομυν γὰρ ἀνάθεμα εἶναι αὐτὸς ἵγια ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ) ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου

"I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart (for I myself wished to be accursed from Christ) for my brethren," &c.—ED.

tions in support of this rendering are strong—1. It is *literal*. The other *is not*. *I wished**—not *I could wish*, is the simple and direct rendering of the verb. To make it conditional it should be in another tense or have a particle of conditionality prefixed to it. If instances to the contrary, they are exceptions to the rule. 2. The sense is complete without the parenthesis. 3. It gives a natural connexion to the second verse, which otherwise it wants. 4. The emphatic expression *I myself* is in this way most naturally explained. It evidently has the sense of—I myself *as well as they*—I too, *like them*, wished to be accursed from Christ. Our translators have shown that this emphatic expression does not naturally suit the ordinary interpretation, by omitting it—“*I myself* could wish,” would not be natural; and they have therefore separated the *myself* from the *I*. 5. It affords an interesting and beautiful sense. It assigns the *reason* of his “great heaviness and sorrow of heart.” The reason lies in the recollection of what he himself had been. He too had rejected Jesus, and thought he should do many things against his Name. He had depreciated all connexion with Him, and had shown his sincerity by blasphemy, persecution, and insult. He now saw and felt the wretchedness and the danger from which he had been saved—having been like “a brand plucked out of the fire.” Remembering, therefore, the misery—“the wormwood and the gall” of his former state, his spirit was loaded with concern and grief for those in the same circumstances. Compassion for *them*, and gratitude for the grace that had made him to differ, combined to produce the sorrow and to inspire the prayer for them. I know of no objection to this simple view of the passage but one—namely, How could he wish to be accursed from Christ before he had any connexion with him? My answer to this plausible objection is, that we are not unaccustomed to speak of our past state and feelings in terms taken from our present views of them, and from our present relation to the object of them. A man who has been

* *Ηὐχέμην.*

turned from the paths of sin and profligacy will say of himself that he then *loved death* and *sought his own destruction*. He would not have said so of himself before the change: but he transfers his present sentiments and feelings to his past condition, and speaks as he *now* is sensible he ought to have thought and ought to have felt. He speaks according to what he now sees to have been the fearful reality of his state. The Apostle wished to have nothing to do with the blood of Christ—he held it an accursed thing; instead of desiring any interest in what he *now* believed to be its atoning virtue, he joined in the dreadful and infatuated imprecation, “His blood be on us and on our children!” On a similar principle, then, as in the other case, the Apostle, in expressing the idea that he wished to have no connexion with Christ, to stand in a state of eternal separation from him, uses terms to express the idea taken from his present condition and views. He would have been what he formerly desired to be, had he now been anathematized and excluded from all relation to Christ, and from all interest in him. As the desire of the wicked after the indulgence of sin, is seen by him, after his conversion, to have been a desire of misery in all the fearful consequences to which sin leads: so Paul’s desire before his conversion to have nothing to do with Christ amounted to the desire of all the dreadful woe which he *now* saw to lie in being accursed from him. There is nothing, so far as I can see, unnatural or far-fetched in this. It is a principle, I think, far from uncommon in the ordinary use of language. In the remembrance of the past and the enjoyment of the present, and the anticipation of the future, his sympathies were all awakened for the objects of his natural and patriotic affection—“his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.” It was no gratification to him that his persecutors should suffer. Their hatred of himself stirred his pity, because it was one of the forms of hatred to Christ, and in the indulgence of it they “wrongs their own souls.” The evil they did to him was nothing compared with what they were doing to themselves. They were his countrymen. They were de-

scended of the same ancestors. Many of them were related to him by the tender ties of more immediate consanguinity. Christianity did not extinguish these peculiar sensibilities. He would have been affected by the distresses of *any* ;—but the unbelief of his brethren—their hardness of heart, and the woes necessarily arising from it, filled him with “great heaviness and continual sorrow.” It was never out of his view. It lay always like a load upon his spirit. It often pierced him through with the keenest agony. He knew that they were “bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” He does not in so many words affirm this; but, in the way least likely to be offensive, and most likely to gain their hearts, he intimates it under the declaration of deep and constant grief on their account. Is not this the very spirit of Christ?*†

In the next verses, the Apostle proceeds to enumerate the peculiar privileges and distinctions belonging to his countrymen. This was calculated to produce *two* effects: first, to

* Luke xix. 41—44.

† Dr. Tregelles, in his work on ‘The Printed Text of the Greek New Testament,’ (1854) p. 219, takes the same view of this passage; reading *νόχόμενον γὰρ ἀυτοῖς ἵγειρα ἀναθέμα εἶναι ἀπὸ τοῦ Χεροτοῦ* as a parenthesis, and rendering, “for I myself *did* wish,” &c. He adds:—“Paul felt full sympathy for his own nation still remaining in unbelief, for he had once been in their condition . . . The desire had then run in full opposition to Him whom he now knew as the Christ; so that his wish had been to stand in no other relation to that person than in one he now knew to be anathema. The preceding chapter ended with the most absolute statement of the impossibility of his being separated from Christ his Saviour. How, after this strong and full assertion, can we imagine the Apostle immediately in the most solemn manner calling on Christ and the Holy Ghost as witnesses to a *wish* on his part to be anathema from Christ for his brethren? This is incomprehensible to me. Nor can I suppose that the New Testament can, on its own principles, sanction such an idea even hypothetically, as that any could be the substitute for others except Christ himself. He who knows the love of Christ in his heart cannot indulge in such a thought, and what could be said to the Holy Ghost being witness with the Apostle’s conscience, (if he had admitted such a sentiment) and this being left by the Spirit on record for our instruction.” It may be added that these remarks were not published for years after Dr. Wardlaw’s Lecture was composed; so that the correspondence in sentiment is purely incidental
—ED.

convince them of the high estimation in which he held Israel, as a people so specially favoured and dignified by Jehovah;—and secondly, to impress them with the aggravated nature of the guilt necessarily contracted by the neglect and the abuse of advantages so eminent.

“Who are *Israelites*?”—the seed of the patriarch Jacob, who so honourably obtained the name of *Israel*—a prince of God.* Paul himself was of the same descent. He had gloried like them in being “of the stock of Israel;” and he still felt the honour, although on very different grounds, and with very dissimilar associations.

“To whom—*the adoption*.” They were the people whom, in infinite condescension, the great God chose for himself—as His peculiar people; adopting them, and performing to them the functions of a tender parent. Of them He commissioned Moses to say, “And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my son: and I say unto thee, let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born.”† And of them and to them He says by the prophets—“They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord:”‡

“And *the glory*.” This appears to refer to those glorious visible symbols of the divine presence and protecting power, which, beginning at their departure from Egypt, attended them through the wilderness; rested in splendour upon the tabernacle; and afterwards honoured the temple. The presence of Jehovah was itself their peculiar glory. But He visibly displayed it amongst them, by the fiery cloud of the Shechinah, and by the ark of His strength over which it

* Gen. xxxii. 28.

† Exod. iv. 22, 23.

‡ Jer. xxxi. 9, 20.

rested. He dwelt and shone forth between the cherubim. By this residence of Jehovah, in the symbols of His glory, amongst them, they were distinguished and honoured above all peoples on the face of the earth :—

“And *the covenants.*” We know from other parts of Paul’s writings what he means by “the covenants.” They are the two covenants—the *Abrahamic* and the *Sinaitic*; the one made with the father of the faithful and confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, “the heirs with him of the same promise,”—the other made with the Jewish people at Sinai. Into the particular nature of each of these covenants we cannot at present enter. All that we have to do with them now is their *both* pertaining to Israel. And this is in full harmony with the language of the prophets and of Paul in interpreting it.* Even the *New Covenant* was thus “*to the Jew first;*” having a primary respect to the natural seed of Abraham. The expression before us, and the passages illustrative of it, seem incapable of any intelligible explanation on any other principle :—

“And *the giving of the law.*” The giving of the Law from Sinai is here chiefly in view, (though not to the exclusion of the subsequent communication of the judicial law by Moses)—the descent of Jehovah on Mount Sinai in the fire and the thick darkness, with all the accompaniments of sublime and fearful majesty; the utterance of “the words of the covenant, even the ten commandments,” in a style in which no law but itself ever was given to men, even by the voice of God himself—the whole scene so divinely awful that Moses himself said, “I exceedingly fear and quake;” and the secret mysterious writing of the same law by the finger of God on “the tables of the covenant.” To this remarkable peculiarity Moses appeals—“Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth; and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as

* See Jer. xxxi. 31—34 with Heb. viii. 8—10.

thou hast heard, and live? Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee; and upon earth he showed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire:”*—

And “the *service of God*.” Other nations were suffered to walk in their own ways; and to follow “gods many and lords many” according to their own perverse and infatuated fancy. But in Israel the true God made himself known, and instituted the rites of His worship. All the forms of His service, of which a great part were typical of “better things to come,” were specially prescribed by His own immediate direction to their lawgiver. The entire ritual of the ceremonial law—the “ordinances of divine service in the worldly sanctuary”—are all included in “the service of God”—by which they were separated from all the idols and idol-worship of the heathen—being set apart for the express purpose of keeping alive the remembrance of God’s name in the earth, when it was so miserably forgotten and dishonoured by all other nations:—

“And *the promises*.” This should be explained by the writer’s ordinary use of the same phrase.† “All the promises of God”—the promises of both temporal and spiritual blessings, were confined originally, in the knowledge of them, to Israel. All these promises, both the one description of them and the other, were made *in Christ*, and in him to the spiritual seed. They had indeed a primary reference to the natural seed of Abraham, being “to the Jew first;”—but they belonged to Israel properly as the church of God—having in it the *true* Israel, the spiritual seed:—

“Whose are *the fathers*.” In this the Jews gloried—founding on it a vain and delusive confidence. Paul mentions it as without doubt a peculiar distinction to be descended from such fathers, on whom Jehovah conferred special honour, by associating their names with his own.‡ The Apostle represents God himself as loving the children for the

* Deut. iv. 32, 33, 36.

† See Heb. xi. 13; Gal. iii. 16.

‡ Exod. iii. 15.

sake of these venerable fathers, and in remembrance of His covenant with them.* No wonder, then, if he speaks of his own attachment as resting in part on this ground:—

“Of whom, as concerning the flesh, CHRIST came.” The Christ, according to the prophecies that went before, was to be of the seed of Abraham, and of David. It was pre-eminently in this sense that “salvation was of the Jews.” They gave birth to the Saviour. In this, God put the very highest honour upon the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—by bringing from among them the human nature of IMMANUEL. The “horn of salvation for Jews and Gentiles was raised up in the house of God’s servant David.”—The expression “*as concerning the flesh*,” or “*as far as respects the flesh*,” or “*as to his human nature*,” is a phrase which prepares us to expect something more. It is a phrase which most assuredly we should never think of using respecting any mere man. They instantly suggest the question, What was he *else*?—what was he not according to the flesh? There is an obviously designed antithesis; the taking away of which divests the words of all their force and meaning, and converts them into a useless and unnatural pleonasm, which adds weakness instead of strength and propriety to the expression and the sentiment.

The antithesis is fully brought out by what follows—“*Who is over all, God blessed for ever*.”—We need not wonder that the adversaries of our blessed Lord’s divinity have been sadly put to it with this most simple and explicit declaration of that all important and essential article of Gospel truth. Conjectural emendation has been tried and reluctantly abandoned;—supplementary particles have been inserted; and every variety of punctuation has been introduced; but in vain. I cannot detain you with these pitiful evasions of the meaning of as plain and simple words as are to be found in the Bible. The most commonly approved Unitarian gloss is that which converts the last clause of the verse into a doxology:—either making the stop in the enumeration at

* Chap. xi. 28.

the word “*came*,” or at the word “*all*.” In the former case, the doxology is, “God who is over all be blessed for ever!”—in the latter, simply, “God be blessed for ever!”

It must suffice for the present to say respecting this mode of rendering—that in no one instance either in the Greek of the New Testament or in the Septuagint translation of the Old, is the arrangement of the words the same as in the passage before us, when a doxology is intended. The only passage which has been pressed for want of a better into the service, is one from the Septuagint in which the entire verse is a piece of unconstruable and unintelligible confusion; and where any similarity that does exist has evidently arisen from the word Jehovah in the Hebrew of the preceding verse having been cut off from the end of it, and inserted in violation of all Greek practice in the beginning of the next.—And not only is the arrangement of the words as a doxology without a precedent; it should be noticed further, in the *first place*, that nothing can well be more unnatural and forced than the introduction of this doxology:—and, *secondly*, that as the words stand, they are in admirable harmony with the Apostle’s design: for it in the highest degree raises and magnifies the honour of Israel in having given birth to this glorious person. It tends to recommend Jesus, who was “despised and rejected of men,” as infinitely more excellent and dignified than the most exalted earthly potentate: and it shows the unbelieving Israelites at the same time how awful were the guilt and the danger of rejecting him.

It is a most explicit and unequivocal testimony to the divinity of our Lord and Saviour. He is “*over all*,” and “*blessed for ever*,”—phrases employed by this writer elsewhere as expressive of the deity of the Father.* Sprung of Israel “as concerning the flesh,” Jesus is supreme God, worthy of the praises and adorations of men and angels:—“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands

* Eph. iv. 6; Rom. i. 25; 2 Cor. xi. 31.

of thousands ; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."* AMEN ! let every one of us say. This is truth, and "worthy of all acceptation." **THE SAVIOUR IS DIVINE.†** In conclusion—

1. *Mark the proper sentiments and feelings with which Christians ought to regard unbelieving sinners.* There must be no contempt—no indifference—no bitterness : they should be viewed with the tenderest compassion and sorrow. When we think of their state as destitute of the love of God and all the present blessings and future hopes arising from it, and as having nothing before them but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment ;" and when we think of this state having been our own and of grace alone having made us to differ :—with what other feelings than those of humility and tenderness can we regard them?—He who knows his own heart will be little at a loss to account for the hardness and unbelief of others. And while he holds all sin in detestation, he will pity sinners, condemning their ways but seeking with all earnestness to save their souls. When the believer looks round on the world he cannot but join issue with the Psalmist in saying, "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law :" and feel with the Apostle a heavy load of sorrow press upon his heart.

The sinner who has himself "tasted that the Lord is gracious," in the forgiveness of his sins, the renewal of his heart, the love of God, and the hope of glory, know-

* Rev. v. 11—14.

† For a full critical discussion of Rom. ix. 5. the reader is referred to a note in the Author's work on the Socinian Controversy, fifth edition, pp. 503—506.—ED.

ing who it is that has “made him to differ,” and “remembering the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged,” will say—‘I was once as you now are; I thought not of the things that belong to my peace; I walked according to the course of this world; I lived without God; the world and the things of the world had my heart—my thoughts, my wishes, my time, my conversation, my pursuits, were all engrossed by them; I gave indulgence to “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;” I cared not for my soul, and, bent on nothing but present acquisition and present enjoyment, I left eternity to shift for itself; the Saviour was in my eyes, as he is now in yours, “a root out of a dry ground;” “I saw no beauty in him” that he should be desired; by me, as by other men, he was “despised and rejected”—his atonement scorned, his invitations slighted, his yoke spurned away from me. Yet I was not happy; though I knew not then, as I do now, the real extent of my misery. Aware of it now, I tremble to think of the danger to which, by my guilt and folly, I was exposing myself:—and the remembrance, while it awakes shame and grief for myself, awakes melting pity for you. I know by experience the course you are pursuing; and I know that “the end of these things is death.” I know too by experience the happiness of the new life on which I have entered, the life of true religion; and knowing the difference,—knowing now what it is to have a sense of pardoned sin, the love of “God shed abroad in my heart,” my “fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life”—God my Father, and heaven my home;—I cannot look at you regarding lying vanities, and forsaking your own mercies,—“spending your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not,”—preferring the world to God, the body to the soul, time to eternity, death to life, hell to heaven;—I cannot look at you thus destroying yourselves, without a pang of distress—with-out “great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for you.” I plead with you in love. My bowels yearn over you. O be persuaded to “choose the good part that shall not be

taken away from you!"—forsake the foolish, and live;—"O taste and see that the Lord is good!" You have tried other sources of happiness—*try this*. You have found, or will find, all else "vanity and vexation of spirit," try this; you will find it yield you the only solid joy, and the only joy that is not bounded by time.'

And this tender solicitude will be peculiarly strong in regard to all connected with us by the ties of nature's love. They are dear to us. We feel for them under their bodily distresses and their earthly privations; and so we ought: but how much more ought we to feel for the perishing condition of their immortal souls! How can we live on from day to day with those who are dear to us by the tenderest bonds, and be cheerful and happy even when we see that they are without Christ and without God! O how fraught with agony the thought, respecting any of "our brethren, our kinsmen according to the flesh," that when we part it is never to meet again till we appear on the right hand and on the left of the great Judge!—How we shall be able to bear the sight of any of our friends stationed on the left, and to hear the sentence addressed to *them*—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"—we are, with our sensibilities in their present state, quite unable to conceive. There will be no sorrow, no pain among the company of the redeemed: but how I am to stand on the right hand and see friends that were dear to me on earth banished from the happy presence of God and the Lamb, without that "heaviness and sorrow of heart" which even the anticipation of it inspires now—I cannot tell. There must be a divine sustaining,—and an overcoming dominion of divine principles, producing a holy acquiescence in divine arrangements, of which *now* I can form not even the most distant imagination. It will not be the extinction of nature's sensibilities, but the transcendent superiority of principles and feelings of a still higher order. O! let such anticipations increase our solicitude to have all our kindred one with us in Christ—one with us for ever!—Therefore

2. *Our conduct should correspond with our feelings.* It

should be affectionately tender and conciliatory. We should study to subdue prejudices to “overcome evil with good,” to subdue enmity by love. Everything should be done to show them that we have their real interests, present and eternal, at heart. By impatience, by passion, we give a false impression of the truth, and confirm enmity and prejudice and opposition. It is by love that we must seek access to the heart;—by displaying “the meekness and gentleness” of our divine Master when exposed to contradiction, cavilling, and contumely. We should bear in mind that, when we speak of these things, we speak to fellow-immortals, on subjects equally interesting to ourselves and to them; and to which, but for the grace of God, we as well as they, should have turned a deaf or a disobedient ear. And there is need for special tenderness mingling with our fidelity, when we speak of God’s coming wrath. It should be felt by us an awful thing to tell a fellow-creature that he must perish for ever. We must not do this as if we had pleasure in denouncing judgment; as if we felt our own security, and cared little whether others heard our warning or not. No: this should be done, with firmness and faithfulness indeed, and a sacred resolution to maintain at all points the divine honour, but at the same time with all the melting persuasiveness of love. This is God’s way—let it be ours:—“Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

3. The advantages and distinctions which God confers, while they may draw regardful consideration and interest towards the objects of His favour, are fitted, at the same time, to excite the livelier compassion when they are misimproved; because responsibility corresponds to privileges, and privilege misimproved aggravates condemnation. How can we but feel a peculiar interest in the seed of Abraham, considering the circumstances of their history—whence they sprung—and whence they have fallen—and what, instrumentally, the world owes to them; yet it is melting to think of the amount of honour abused to the cherishing of pride,

and of the amount of privilege vainly trusted in and wickedly misimproved and perverted; of the thick veil that lies to this day upon their hearts; of their stubborn refusal of the truth, in spite of all the accumulated and palpable evidences of its divinity, even in the very circumstances of their own nation, their own city and temple and religion! But let not the pitying and condemnatory sentence light upon the Jews only. *You* have the oracles of God. *You* have privileges and benefits of a still higher order—advantages above both Jews and heathen. If you are blind, it is in the midst of light. You wilfully close your eyes. You have no wish to see. If you are ignorant, it is while surrounded with the means of knowledge. If you perish with the Bible in your possession you must perish with a heavier damnation than the heathen, or even than the Jews themselves.*

Children of the true Israel—sons and daughters of godly parents—*you* have special advantages. Consider them; contrast them with the condition of others; look forward to your final account; think how fearful the doom you will bring upon yourselves if you live without God. O give not occasion by your obstinate perverseness for “heaviness and sorrow of heart” in the bosoms of those who love you best and most earnestly seek your welfare. Let not the spirits of parents or other godly friends be heavy-laden on your account. Pierce them not through with many sorrows. Bring not down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Let them have joy of you in the Lord. “My son, if thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine. Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice.”† All the truly wise and good will sympathize with the parental joy;—yea there shall be sympathy with it in heaven; “for there is joy before the angels of God in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.”

* Matt. xi. 21—24.

† Prov. xxiii. 15, 16, 24, 25.

LECTURE XL.

ROMANS IX. 6—18.

“ Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: that is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth,) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.”

I DOUBT not that to the contents of this chapter, amongst other parts of Paul’s writings, the Apostle Peter had reference when he spoke of things hard to be understood.* When, therefore, we approach such a subject as that of which it mainly treats, we may truly say that deep reverence for God and a humble consciousness of our own inferiority in intellectual comprehension, as well as of our utter unworthiness as sinners, and the biassing power of our principles of de-

* 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.

pravity, are the only sentiments and dispositions of mind with which we can safely “draw nigh hither.” We must “put off our shoes from off our feet,” for it is “holy ground.” This may not be the temper which a false and high-minded philosophy likes,—a philosophy that spurns at all restraint, and smiles in scorn at the timid shrinkings of piety; but it is the only rational temperament on such subjects, the only state of mind suited to the investigations of divine science. Far from us be that unhallowed and infatuated presumption which advances with the same fearlessness into the deepest mysteries of the divine procedure, as that with which it investigates a principle of abstract geometry, or a fact in natural history! Let us examine, but let it be “with reverence and godly fear.”

The principal point of controversy respecting the chapter is, whether the election of which the Apostle treats in it be a *personal* or a *national* election; and this necessarily includes another point of dispute, namely, whether it be election to the final enjoyment of everlasting life, or only election to the possession of the outward privileges and means of salvation. This other topic, I say, is included in the former; for if the election be national, it can only of course be to means and privileges; there being evidently no such thing as national salvation.*

* Some attempt to resolve the entire discussion into an illustration and defence of the great fundamental Pauline doctrine, that *salvation is of grace through faith*—in other words, that it is *the purpose of God to save them that believe*. But there are objections to this altogether insuperable:—1. We cannot imagine the Apostle departing so very widely from his ordinary mode of stating that great gospel truth, and, by the adoption of a phraseology respecting it so different, and so much more difficult of apprehension, wrapping in obscurity what he had previously set forth with so much simplicity and clearness:—Then 2. On the other hand, if this be all that Paul means to state, it is not easy to see where we are to find the “things hard to be understood,” that is, hard to be understood, not in their *verbal expression* but *in themselves*, and which were so much in danger of being wrested by the sinner “to his destruction;” for this would never be said of the connexion of salvation with the faith of the gospel, and the assurance of it to all who believe:—And 3. Such a view of the meaning leaves no possible room for the objections which the Apostle supposes might

Our first observation, then, is, and we beg special attention to it, because of its immediate bearing at the outset on the settlement of this question; that the distinction with which the Apostle opens his discussion is not a national but a personal one. It is not a distinction between Jews and Gentiles, between the nation of Israel and the other nations of the earth; but between Jews and Jews, between one part of the people of Israel and another. That we may clearly see this, let us mark the connexion of the passage with what precedes, and the general principle of the reasoning. In the preceding verses he expresses his “heaviness and sorrow of heart for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.” The cause of his sorrow was the disbelief of so large a portion of his countrymen, and the consequence about to result from it—their judicial rejection by the God of their fathers, the God whose Son they had “despised and rejected.” They had “cast Him out of the vineyard, and slain Him, that the inheritance might be theirs;”* but instead of securing their object, this crowning act of rebellion forfeited it, with all its attendant blessings. They who had cast out the Son were for this to be cast out themselves.

be started against the doctrine which he actually lays down. There are *two objections*, which, in like manner, in the form of questions, the Apostle supposes may be started against the doctrine he was, in this chapter, teaching. That, therefore, which he does teach, must be a doctrine which might naturally, or, at all events, possibly suggest and give apparent colour to the objections. The objections are in the two questions—“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?”—and “Thou wilt say, then, unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?”—Now, in the doctrine of *election*, as generally understood among us, and as we conceive it to be clearly taught in this chapter, we can see *plausible ground* for *both* the objections. The doctrine naturally enough suggests them, and imparts to them a measure of seeming reasonableness:—whereas, on the supposition of the lesson taught being that of the justification of believers, and the divine purpose and determination that believers in Christ should be justified and saved,—the objections are at once bereft of all their relevancy,—so that it becomes impossible they should ever have been made. This ought to go far, of itself, to settle the true character of the doctrine here taught.—*Extract from an unpublished Sermon by the Author.*—ED.

* Luke xx. 14.

The question then comes to be:—How is such rejection and disinheritance of the great body of the Jewish people to be reconciled with the promises of Jehovah to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? How can this rejection take place, and God be faithful? The question had been alluded to in an early part of the Epistle.* The answer to the objection there is general, resting on a principle ever to be assumed with unhesitating certainty, that, whatever difficulties men may find, God must be true. If this is not a principle to be assumed, there can be nothing whatever certain. He does not there unfold the further principle on which the faithfulness of God is vindicated from all imputation. Formerly he had only said, in effect, that whatever might be the principle of solution for the difficulty started in the objection, we must, on no account, let our minds be shaken as to the veracity and faithfulness of God.

But here we have the principle of solution:—verses 6—8. “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: that is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.” We must understand these verses in a sense that meets and answers the objection they are intended to repel; and indeed there seems to be but one sense in which they can be understood. “*The word of God*” is the word of divine promise to Abraham and his seed. Two things are here assumed concerning it: first, that every word of God must “*take effect*;” and, secondly, that this word must have had a fulfilment to the full amount of its original import. Whatever was designed to be included in the promise, it must, in that sense, and in all its extent, be verified. The Apostle does not invent an hypothesis to get rid of a difficulty. If the whole of the seed of Abraham by natural descent was meant by the phrase, “*thy seed*,” in the promise; then to the whole it

* Chap. iii. 3, 4.

must have been fulfilled. It could be no vindication of the faithfulness of God that a promise made to the whole was verified to a part.

The principle of vindication is, that the promise of the covenant with Abraham was not made to the natural descendants of the patriarch simply as such. If, indeed, it had been so, the faithfulness of God could not have been vindicated with regard either to the temporal or the spiritual promise; inasmuch as neither the blessings of the one nor of the other have been possessed by the whole of the fleshly seed. When it is said:—"They are not all Israel who are of Israel," the connexion clearly requires the meaning to be, that all who are sprung from Abraham by natural descent are not, in virtue of that connexion merely, the Israel to whom the promises were made. And so of the following phrase:—"Neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children," i. e. such children as were meant in the promises. They were children in one sense, but not in that sense. "But in Isaac shall thy seed be called." And he subjoins his interpretation of the words:—"That is, they who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." This is one of not a few passages, in which the word *only* or *merely* is necessary as a supplement. The obvious meaning is, that natural descent alone did not constitute a title to the promises, not being the ground on which they were made. Ishmael was the seed of Abraham, after the flesh, as well as Isaac; and so were Abraham's offspring by Keturah. But Isaac was preferred by God to Ishmael, both personally, and as the progenitor of Him who was, by way of eminence, the seed of Abraham; and as being the first in the line of descent in which the promises were primarily to be fulfilled. This preference of Isaac to Ishmael was according to the free purpose of God; and it was an illustration of the distinction between the true children of God, who "walk in the steps of Abraham's faith," and others who should be his children merely after the flesh, and have no spiritual relation to the father of the faithful, but should

be in reality “of their father the devil.”* The distinction is strongly marked in various parts of God’s word.† The expression (Gal. iv. 28) is worthy of particular notice:—“We, as Isaac was, are children of the promise.” It clearly shows what is meant by “children of the promise;” and in what sense Isaac was such—being the first of Abraham’s spiritual seed. *They* are the “children of the promise,” i. e. the seed promised, and the seed to whom the other promises of the covenant were made; and to these, and to all these, the promises are fulfilled.

Now it is clear that here we have a *personal* distinction. It is not a distinction simply between the nation of the Jews as descended from Isaac, and the tribes of the Arabians as descended from Ishmael. You will at once perceive that this could not serve the purpose of the Apostle’s argument. It is of the rejection of a part of the former that he is speaking; and his object is to show the faithfulness of God to His promise, and the full effect of His word, notwithstanding such rejection. But this he would never make good, if the declaration, “*In Isaac shall thy seed be called*,” expressed no more than a distinction between the natural seed of Isaac and the natural seed of Ishmael. He must mean more than this if he means anything to his purpose, namely, a distinction amongst the natural posterity of Isaac themselves: the declaration implying that in the line of descent from Isaac should come the seed to whom the promises of the covenant were made, namely, the spiritual seed, and that great Deliverer in whom the spiritual seed should sustain their relation to God. Ishmael was for a time the apparent heir; and in him it seems as if Abraham had for a time, with an incredulity hardly worthy of his character, expected the promise to be fulfilled. This much seems implied in his petition:—“O that Ishmael might live before thee;”‡ for God immediately answers that petition by words intended to suppress every rising doubt:—“Sarah thy wife

* John viii. 44.

† John viii. 37—39, 44; Gal. iv. 21—23, 28—31.

‡ Gen. xvii. 18.

shall bear thee a son indeed."* This was to be the child of promise, "the son of the free woman." He was to supplant Ishmael, and in his line the seed was to be born "in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed."

A further illustration of the same thing is drawn from Isaac's immediate progeny: verses 10—13. "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth,) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." "*Not only this.*" The distinction did not end here; that between Isaac and Ishmael was followed by that between Jacob and Esau. And the instance is, if possible, still more in point. It might be alleged that, in the former instance, the difference was made on account of the inequality of the parties:—Ishmael being the son of an Egyptian slave, while Isaac was the child of the honoured wife of the patriarch, who had from God himself the name of nobility:—that the promissory declaration was made, too, subsequently to the birth of the former, and even when he had arrived at an age when symptoms of his profaneness might have begun to discover themselves. But the latter instance presents parties in all respects equal. They were children of one father, by one mother, at one birth. The declaration of the difference between them was made previously to their birth; and could not, therefore, be influenced by any indications of character in either of the parties, as might appear to have occurred in the former instance. And this was so ordered, that the election might be shown to be independent of character or of works, and to arise entirely from the sovereign good pleasure of God. In these circumstances "it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger."

This was literally true of the posterity of Jacob and Esau

* Gen. xvii. 19.

The latter became tributary, at various times, to the former.* But more is evidently meant by the expression than this. It intimated that Esau, though the older, was to become the inferior, *i. e.*, that the natural and instituted order was to be reversed; that Esau was to lose his birthright, and, in losing it, to make a forfeiture of the blessings of God's covenant connected with it, the spiritual as well as the temporal: so that God, as the God of the covenant, should not be called "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Esau," but of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." This was the sovereign appointment of Jehovah, the result of His electing grace in favour of Jacob.

The Apostle further confirms this from the language of prophecy:—"I have loved you, saith the Lord: yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."† It has been thought that, from God's being spoken of here as "giving the heritage of Esau to the dragons of the wilderness," all that is meant by His loving the one of the brothers and hating the other, is that He conferred temporal blessings on the posterity of the one and withheld them from that of the other. It seems manifest, however, that Jacob and Esau are here spoken of, in the first instance, personally; and that the possession of the temporal inheritance by the posterity of the one, in preference to that of the other, was the result, and but a small part of the result, of the sovereign preference of the one brother himself. He was made heir of the blessings of the covenant; and the inheritance which thus fell to him by the sovereign appointment of God, was the type of the heavenly, the promises of which (the principal promises of the covenant) were couched under those of the earthly Canaan; and the earthly became the pledge as well as type of the heavenly. The loss of Canaan, as inclusive of both, was the consequence of Esau's personal rejection as heir of the covenant. We shall see afterwards, that while sovereign election to life is a scriptural

* 2 Sam. viii. 14; 2 Kings viii. 20.

† Mal. i. 2, 3.

and important idea, there is no such thing as sovereign reprobation or appointment to death. This is not the effect of sovereignty, but of equity; and is the consequence invariably of the individual's own guilt. Although it was the previous and sovereign purpose of God that Jacob should be "the heir of promise," that Canaan and the blessings of the covenant in general should be his and not Esau's; yet Esau's forfeiture was the righteous effect of his own "profanity," as the Apostle expresses it, in despising his birthright, and selling it for "a morsel of meat." In this act, he set at nought the covenant of God; and being "left to the freedom of his own will," and to the influence of his own corrupt, and worldly, and sensual desires, he wilfully renounced, as of little worth, the promises connected with the birthright, and incurred the divine displeasure. For the hatred of God is never to be considered as regarding its objects simply as creatures. It is always connected with *sin*. Love is sovereign in choosing its objects. But it is the "workers of iniquity" whom God "hateth." It was as such that Esau was hated. The hatred is not to be considered, nor is it here represented, as independent of evil in the object of it. On the contrary, his "not inheriting the blessing" was the consequence of his profanity in selling his birthright.*

In mentioning Esau and Jacob, the Apostle introduces an important general principle on the subject of election. The declaration of Jacob's superiority, as by the sovereign will of God to be the heir of the covenant blessings, was declared before the birth of the twins, and before, consequently, any difference had appeared between them; "that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works but of Him that calleth." Now, first of all, it is very plain that the election could not be on the ground of works performed; for none, from the nature of the case, had been or could have been performed. Was it, then, on the ground of works foreseen? It is forgotten, when men allege this, that, in regard to principle, it is the very same thing. Every one must per-

* Heb. xii. 16, 17.

ceive that, if the divine determination were fixed on the ground of works performed, there could be no such thing at all as previous purpose. If there be such a thing as previous purpose, then is it manifest that, were that purpose "of works," it must of necessity be of works "as foreseen;" none, from the circumstances of the case, having been performed. When, therefore, on such a subject we find it affirmed, in unqualified terms, that "it is not of works," it must mean that it is not of works as foreseen; because from the very nature of previous purpose, it could not, when the purpose was formed, be of works in any other way, none having been done, the parties being "not yet born." A previous purpose must either be on the ground of works foreseen, or not on the ground of works at all; so that, when it is affirmed not to be of works, it can mean nothing else than that it is not of works foreseen.

"*The purpose of God according to election*" is that purpose by which He determines the salvation of those who are the objects of His electing love. "Whom he foreknew He also did predestinate." We are here, therefore, explicitly taught that "*the purpose of God according to election*" did not proceed on the ground of foreseen differences of character, that very difference being included in the purpose; but that it is of grace, of the free favour of "Him that calleth," *i. e.*, that effectually calleth, calleth "out of darkness into his marvellous light." He calls "according to his purpose."* God's choosing some, then, to life, and not choosing others, is not, according to the Apostle, on account of good in the one or of greater evil in the other. All are sinners, all foreseen of God as such; so that, if evil in one prevented election, evil in all would, on the same principle, prevent the election of any. And therefore, although the condemnation of every one that is condemned shall be on account of his sins (in which there is no exercise of sovereignty, but of simple justice), yet his not being chosen must not be considered as arising from this cause; because if sin were suffi-

* Chap. viii. 28.

cient to prevent the election of any, it must have prevented the election of all. The distinction, therefore, of sinners, arising from the election of some and the non-election of others, must be viewed as resulting from what we call the sovereign good pleasure of God:—of which, however, it is of moment that we should beware of forming unworthy conceptions, as if it were at all akin to caprice in the creature. We mean by it, as will appear more fully afterwards, not that this part of the divine conduct, more than any other, is determined by no reasons. We mean that it is determined by an unrevealed, and therefore to us unknown, reason, concealed in His own infinite mind, and in the concealment of which consists His sovereignty; a reason or reasons, we may rest assured, though to us they are not made known, consistent in all respects with His infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness. All that we know is, that the reason, be it what it may, is not any good desert in the creature.

14 This general principle will come more fully out, when we consider the spirit of the objection which the Apostle supposes to be started:—verse 14. “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.” You must at once be sensible, that for the objection here anticipated there could have existed not only no valid ground but no conceivable colour, no pretext possessing even the slightest portion of plausibility—it never could have entered into any man’s mind, if the election spoken of had been on account of good works foreseen in the objects of choice as opposed to evil in those rejected. And surely that view which leaves no possible room, no shadow of plausibility, for the objection, cannot be the view against which the objection is supposed to be made.

The charge, hypothetically brought against God in the objection, the Apostle first rejects indignantly as an impossible thing, a thing which it was impious even to suppose. “Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!” Far be it! Away with such a thought! Whatever be made of this or of any difficulty, let it be firmly settled in our minds as a principle which must on no account be questioned,

that there is, and can be, no unrighteousness with God. "He is a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is He."* Without this how should God judge the world? The supposition involves the overthrow of all moral government on God's part and responsibility on man's.

The Apostle, however, does not rest satisfied with this. He proceeds with his argument to show the objector, on principles such as every duly humble and candid mind should admit, that, in the instance of which he treats, there is no room for the imputation:—verse 15. "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." 15

The whole context shows, that the Apostle had chiefly in view the refutation of Jewish objectors, and the satisfaction and conviction of his countrymen. He therefore makes reference to their own Scriptures, to prove the consistency of his doctrine with the statements contained in them, and with the recorded conduct of Jehovah:—"I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."† Was it a national distinction which God meant when He made this declaration of His sovereignty? a declaration of His being perfectly at liberty to bestow upon the Israelitish people the peculiar privileges which they enjoyed, and to withhold them from others? Not at all. This was true; but not the truth then declared, nor a truth bearing any relation to the immediate circumstances of the case. The grace and the mercy have immediate reference to the need and to the exercise of pardon. And this, again, has reference to the condition of Israel at the time they had transgressed, or, as Moses himself expresses it, "had sinned a great sin, and made themselves gods of gold." And in this language to Moses God asserts His sovereignty in the exercise of His forgiveness. Israel having sinned, having committed the enormous and heavily

* Deut. xxxii. 4.

† Exod. xxxiii. 19.

aggravated trespass of idolatry in the making and worshipping of the golden calf, they lay at God's mercy. To cast them off would have been their desert. It would have been an act of equity—of retributive justice; but He had a sovereign right to show them mercy if He would. But even this is not all. Among the guilty Israelites He had the same sovereign right to select the objects of His pardoning clemency on the one hand, and of His righteous judicial infliction on the other. He could in justice punish all who had transgressed; He could in sovereign mercy pardon all who had transgressed; or He could in mercy pardon some while in justice He punished others. The forgiveness of one did not render another less guilty, or his punishment the less deserved and righteous. What Jehovah, then, in these words, declares, is His high prerogative of showing undeserved mercy according to His pleasure.

Let it, then, be particularly observed that this free exercise of mercy proceeds upon the ground that *all are guilty, all alike undeserving of favour.* This is the foundation-stone of the doctrine. All being regarded as guilty, justice might take its course against all. If this be once assumed it will instantly and inevitably follow that God's showing mercy to any one can arise from nothing else than His own sovereign pleasure; in as far, at least, as desert on the part of the culprit is concerned. We can trace the exercise of clemency towards one rather than to another, only to his own will—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;" that is, I will pardon what sinners I please. We can assign no other reason why He has not mercy on all equally, or why He has mercy on this sinner rather than on that. Secret reasons of His own He has by which His will is determined. But all that we know, and all that it concerns us to know is, that the reason is not any worthiness on the part of those chosen; and we are certain, on the most obvious principles of reason, that, where all are guilty, mercy must of necessity be free.

In this, then, it appears, that there is no "unrighteousness

with God." Those to whom mercy is shown, since they owe it in no respect whatever to themselves, have nothing wherein to glory; and those to whom it is not shown, since their deserts remain the same, and they receive only their due, can have nothing whereof to complain. I know it is difficult to fix this as a full conviction in men's minds. They still retain an impression as if the showing of mercy to others did make some difference to them, and left room for secret reflection upon the hardship to them. But this is more a matter of feeling than judgment. I am guilty. If the God whom I have offended should punish me as my sins deserve, would He not be perfectly just in doing so? Assuredly. Well; does His showing mercy to another render my sins less numerous or less heinous than they were? does it in any respect alter them, or in any degree on any principle do away my obnoxiousness to His displeasure? Does it become unjust in Him to punish me? Is not the guilt of each individual his own? And if my perdition would have been righteous on the supposition of all perishing along with me, does it become unrighteous on the supposition of some only perishing along with me? Were I to be subjected to suffering for any or all of the sins of the pardoned, I might, indeed, have good cause to complain; but if I suffer solely on account of my own sins, I suffer righteously, even if none should suffer but myself. There is mercy to others; but there is still nothing but righteousness to me. Have I any claims on God for this mercy? Can I establish any title to it? A claim! a title! such a thing would, of course, destroy the very nature of mercy. There can be no mercy where there is title or claim. And if I have no claim, no title, "is there unrighteousness with God" if He does not bestow upon me that to which I have no right? Nay, I not only do not deserve it, but the very opposite. The grand error of men lies in supposing distinctions among sinners, and secretly founding presumptuous and irrational notions of desert, on the ground of mere inferiority in the amount of actual guiltiness; a principle most false and senseless; and which, even were it true and reasonable, men are incapable of applying as the gauge of human desert. No

proposition ought to be more self-evident than that, where God is under no obligation from any principle of abstract rectitude, or from any voluntarily imposed engagement, to be gracious to any, His actually being so can be owing to no cause but that He "will be gracious."

"So then," the Apostle infers, (ver. 16) "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." There is an allusion in the words to the facts respecting Jacob and Esau.* There was willing and running on both sides. Rebekah and Jacob desired the blessing; so did Esau. Esau "ran" to hunt the venison that he might please his father, and obtain it; Jacob, too, hastened, that he might accomplish the device of his mother ere his brother's return. There was on both sides desire and exertion; and the exertion on Jacob's part was of a kind most unjustifiable. But we have seen† that the purpose of God was previous to and independent of the "willing" and the "running" of either.

In like manner, as to the salvation of sinners, whether Jew or Gentile, God is not to be considered as purposing to save such as He foresees will be willing of themselves, from better dispositions than belong to others, to accept His salvation. But His purpose is *to save*; and a part of the fulfilment or following out of that purpose is the bringing of the sinner to a willingness to be saved in His own way. If there be no unrighteousness with God in bestowing favour upon the undeserving, there is and can be none in His withholding that favour. This is a necessary consequence. The two propositions, indeed, are identical. All are, by the hypothesis, undeserving. In withholding, therefore, what is undeserved there can be "no unrighteousness." Is there, then, unrighteousness in bestowing it? If not, (and who can allege there is?) then is there no right whatever violated, nothing of which any one can have the most distant legitimate ground to complain. God treats no party unjustly. He gives and He withholds, in equal consistency with the claims of righteousness.

The same general principle is illustrated from the history

* Gen. xxvii.

† Verses 11, 12.

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of Pharaoh:—verse 17. “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” “I have raised thee up,” does not refer to God’s creating or bringing Pharaoh into existence; but to His exalting him to his eminent station, and upholding him in it till that particular crisis. The avowed end is here distinctly stated; and the subsequent fact corresponded with the avowed end. God did “show His power” in a very remarkable manner, and “His name” was in consequence “magnified” far and wide. The fame of it spread to distant countries. It preceded the Israelites to Canaan, and to the nations that lay in their way thither; and contributed to their successful entrance into the promised land.† Was there in this “unrighteousness with God?” God did not infuse into the heart of the Egyptian monarch any evil dispositions. He only “raised him up,” assigned him his royal station; in which the free and unconstrained exercise of the naturally and sinfully acquired propensities of his character gave occasion for the interference and manifestation of the power of God. But His power, as it always does, interposed in righteousness. The judgments executed by it were all merited on Pharaoh’s own part by his pride and wickedness. The principle of the “wrath of men” being made “to praise God,”‡ was verified. Now this, we are necessitated to believe, God does every day and every hour and every moment, in the regular course of His providential administration. He accomplishes, we mean to say, His own ends, by placing men in circumstances in which He perfectly and infallibly knows the operation of their evil dispositions will work in a certain way, and produce certain results. To deny that the Supreme God does this, is to deny the plainest statements and historical illustrations of His own word, and indeed to deny that God governs the world. For without this, its government would be

* Exod. ix. 16.

† Exod. vii. 5; xiv. 4; xv. 14—16; Josh. ii. 9, 10, &c.

‡ Psa. lxxvi. 10.

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impracticable even for an hour. But God not only "showed his *power*" in Pharaoh by the judgments which He executed; He showed also, by leaving the proud rebellious monarch to himself, His right and prerogative, (v. 18.) to "have mercy on whom he will; and whom he will to harden."

I am well aware how harsh these words sound; how stumbling and revolting they are to many minds. They cannot fail to be so to all, till they are properly considered and understood. But both the nature of things and the context and tenor of the writer's argument must be considered, and considered closely and dispassionately. Observe, then, 1. The Apostle is answering the question:—"Is there unrighteousness with God?" We may therefore be perfectly assured that "*hardening*," whatever it mean, cannot mean the direct infusion of evil principles and dispositions, by any positive influence upon the mind and heart. That were to bring a charge against God of fearful unrighteousness indeed. It were to make Him the author or producer of sin. The direct infusion or implantation of an evil principle would constitute him who infused or implanted it the greatest of all sinners, inasmuch as it would render him answerable for all the actual evil resulting from the principle, and for the act of producing it besides. He who plants the seed of the poison tree is chargeable with the destructive effects of the poison. He who kindles a light that "leads astray" is responsible for all the mischief that accrues to misguided wanderers. Let us tremble at the thought of thus impeaching infinite purity and justice. Men's hardness of heart is their own. It is their disinclination to that which is good, their aversion from holiness, their enmity against God, their love of sin and obstinate determination to persist in it, their growing insensibility and stubbornness. And all this is their sin, else there is no such thing as sin in existence.

2. It is worthy of special remark that, when God is spoken of as "*hardening*" any heart, the heart that He hardens is always a heart that is already hard. God is never represented as hardening a heart that was previously soft, as rendering callous the heart that is tender and susceptible.

No; when the blessed God is described as effecting any change upon the heart, it is a change precisely the reverse of this; it is a change from hard to soft; not from flesh to stone, but from stone to flesh.* This is the proper work of God; and a blessed and glorious work it is, equally worthy of His holiness and His love, infinitely worthy of both. It follows—

3. When God is said to “harden” any heart, it means no more than that He leaves that heart to its native or contracted hardness; or, further, that by the circumstances in which His providence places the sinner, He gives room for the manifestation of his obstinacy in sin, and his resolute perverseness, which, by a strong natural tendency (the tendency of all principles and dispositions, whether good or bad,) to derive strength from exercise, contributes to its own increase. This was precisely the case with Pharaoh; and we could not have a better illustration of our position, a more satisfactory example of what the Apostle means by “hardening.” The heart of Pharaoh was already hard. He was in spirit proud and tyrannical. He was “stout-hearted and far from righteousness.”† This being the previous character of his heart when Moses was sent to him, all that can be meant by God’s “hardening his heart,” is that He did not soften it; but that, by the circumstances in which He placed him, He gave scope for the display, and for the confirmation of a stubborn, pertinacious pride of spirit. It was, accordingly, a hardening such as was quite consistent with Pharaoh’s hardening his own heart, and being guilty of sin in so doing. I wish you particularly to mark the different modes of expression used by the inspired historian in regard to the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart: *God* is said to harden it; *Pharaoh himself* is said to harden it; and it is said simply *to have been hardened*. And more especially still, that there is the clearest evidence of these modes of expression, particularly the first and the second, being used as of equivalent import:—“But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite,

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

† Isa. xlvi. 12

he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the Lord had said." "And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the Lord had spoken by Moses."* Mark what is here said:—"Pharaoh hardened his heart,"—"sinned yet more and hardened his heart," "as the Lord had spoken." Now, what had the Lord spoken? "I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go." "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt."† This is remarkable. God had said:—"I will harden Pharaoh's heart;" and this saying of God was verified when Pharaoh hardened his own heart. The two expressions are therefore to be regarded, on inspired authority, as of the same amount.

It has been said, I am aware, that "no right principle of interpretation will permit our viewing God's hardening as God's leaving the king of Egypt to harden himself. Hardening a person, and leaving that person to harden himself, are two perfectly different things. The language is express—'Whom he will he hardeneth.' We must not take these words to mean something altogether different from what they say." Be it so. Then, what, according to this writer, *do* the words say? What is their direct and proper meaning, which we are bound to take without note or comment? The words which immediately follow tell us:—"It is evident, then, that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, only in doing what was best fitted to soften it." This is *evident*. We are charged, when we consider the words as meaning God's leaving the sinner to harden himself, as "taking them to mean something altogether different from what they say;" and are reminded that—"hardening a person, and leaving that person to harden himself, are two perfectly different things." But is there no room for the application of what

* Exod. viii. 15; ix. 34, 35.

† Chap. iv. 21; vii. 3.

he thus says to his own interpretation? May we not well say—*Hardening* a person, and “*doing what was best fitted to soften him*,” are two perfectly different things? The writer does not seem to be, in the least degree, sensible, that while he is schooling others for putting any other than the literal meaning upon the words, he is himself putting a far *less* literal sense upon them than the one he is condemning:—which is, in reality, the sense put on them by the inspired historian himself.

I am far from being disposed to question that the judgments executed had in them a tendency to convince of Jehovah’s supremacy, and, when rightly viewed, to soften, subdue, and break down the heart. The language of them was—to Pharaoh and his people—“Humble yourselves under his mighty hand.” Nor can there be a doubt that, had they operated to the production of true repentance and faith in the God of Israel, the result to them would have been salvation instead of destruction. Yet God announced beforehand that such would *not* be their effect; that they would progressively harden instead of softening, and thus augment guilt instead of diminishing and cancelling it. There was in this, however, no “unrighteousness with God.” It was no fault of His that these judgments did not operate a favourable change in Pharaoh, but hardened him in rebellion, and thus exposed him, by increase of guilt, to increase of judicial vengeance. Were there unrighteousness in this, then might we truly affirm that the Ruler of the world is *of necessity* unrighteous. If you admit the providential administration of God at all, you cannot but admit that God is unceasingly placing men in circumstances in which their evil passions have full excitement and full play, and work out certain results. The greatest events in the history of our world exemplify this. Who can doubt that Judas was placed in the circumstances which, while they ought to have had the opposite effect, wrought upon his avarice or his jealousy, or whatever was the secret spring of his conduct, and prompted him to the betraying of his Master? Who can doubt that Pilate was exposed by providence to the tempta-

tion of yielding to popular clamour, and giving up Jesus to the popular will? Who can doubt that all the circumstances were arranged in providence, which, by their operation on the passions of men, ended in the awful yet to a sinful world the blessed result of the Redeemer being “by wicked hands crucified and slain?”

Let us be on our guard. We may be over-zealous for the credit of God’s mercy, and feel too little zeal for the honour of His righteousness. When we are earnestly contending for His love, we may too much overlook the glory both of His justice and His sovereignty. I can hardly conceive of anything more perverse than when, in the words before us, it is affirmed—“He hath mercy on whom he *will*, and he hardeneth whom he *will*,”—to insist upon it that in the latter case the will is a will to have mercy, *in the same sense* as in the former; that there was a will to have mercy on Pharaoh as really and as much as on Moses and Aaron; that, in a word, although the Apostle says—“Whom he will he hardeneth,” there is, in *no sense*, a will to harden. It is enough to say that every such view of the words is at variance with the spirit of the objection to the doctrine taught in them,—depriving it of all plausibility, and every semblance of reason—“Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?” It is manifest, that if there was no difference in the divine will in the two cases,—if the will was, in the one case, just as in the other, to “*have mercy*,”—the hardening *was* resisting his will. To identify the two cases in this way, is to destroy the distinction, as it relates to God, which the Apostle so plainly makes between them.—Still, let not the meaning we have affixed to *hardening* be forgotten. That meaning I proceed to establish by noticing—

4. On various occasions, God is represented, in His own word, as *doing* that which He only *permits* in His providence *to be done*,—and as *doing to men* that which He only *leaves men to bring upon themselves*. Let me give a few instances of this:—“And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet; and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from

the midst of my people Israel.”* Does the God of truth ever *deceive* any one? What *can* be meant by such an expression, but that He left that prophet to the deceitful imaginations and self-interested propensities of his own mind and heart?—that He thus made him the instrument of punishing His people for their criminal unbelief of the *true* prophets?—and that He did this, without in the least interfering with the free will and free agency of the prophet or of the people, or in the least diminishing their guilt? If anything more were necessary to render this explanation manifestly the true one,—it would be the fact of God’s threatening the prophet, in the latter part of the verse, with punitive vengeance from the very God that makes the previous declaration. But indeed there should be nothing more necessary to the acceptance of the interpretation, than the simple impossibility of the God of truth “deceiving” any one, and becoming the patron of falsehood and wickedness. If, therefore, “*deceived*” in this passage means no more than suffering to be deceived or to deceive himself,—why not apply the same principle to the *hardening* in our text? Again: the Lord says by the same prophet—“Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live.”† But “the law of the Lord is perfect:—the statutes of the Lord are right:—the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” It can be nothing then of the Lord’s own that is here meant; and the word *gave* must be understood in a similar sense. The statutes and judgments of the *Heathen* seem evidently to be meant, which Jehovah is represented as *giving them*, in displeasure and punishment for their refusal and abuse of *his own*. He *left them to follow* evil counsels and statutes, in judicial retribution for their neglect and prostitution of their distinguishing and precious privileges. The same principle must be applied in explaining 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. “And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.” And in this case we

* Ezek. xiv. 9

† Ezek. xx. 25.

happen to have the explanation in the parallel passage—1 Chron. xxi. 1. “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.” On what principle, but the principle of divine *permission*, can the former of these two verses be interpreted? Satan was allowed of God to tempt David to this evil; and, from the style of expression, it is manifest that it was not *for this evil alone* that the subsequent judgments were inflicted; other previously existing evils having already provoked the Lord to anger.*

This further illustration from the case of Pharaoh, brought forward by the Apostle, may serve the more fully to satisfy us, that it is of a *personal* and not a *national* distinction the Apostle is throughout arguing. Pharaoh’s was an *individual case*;—and when from *his* case the general maxim of the divine administration is deduced—“Therefore”—or “So then, he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth,”—nothing can well be clearer, than that the reference is to *individuals*;—and to individuals, not merely in regard to their possession of external privileges, but in regard to spiritual character, and prospects for eternity. And this will still more fully appear hereafter.

The *present* conclusion—the conclusion to which the previous reasonings of the Apostle conduct us, is this:—that there is *no unrighteousness with God*, when He exercises favour with sovereign freeness in the bestowment of blessings;—and that He is equally clear of any such imputation, when He leaves sinners, who persist in their wilful rebellion, to the righteous and merited consequences of their sins;—no unrighteousness in *freely pardoning*—no unrighteousness in *justly punishing*. For we must never allow you to lose sight of the broad line of distinction between the province of *sovereignty* and that of *justice*. There is no sover-

* Look too for a singularly striking example of God’s being represented as *doing* that which in his providence he *allows to be done*—to 2 Sam. xii. 11, 12. It is on a similar principle, that God is represented as judicially giving men up to walk in counsels and ways of their own: Psa. lxxxii. 11, 12; Rom. i. 26, 28. And many times are sinners described as hardening themselves: 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13; Neh. ix. 16, 17; Jer. vii. 25, 26, &c.

eighty in *punishing*; but there is absolute sovereignty in *pardon*. God bestows pardon and life as a *sovereign benefactor*; he visits with punishment as a *righteous Judge*. All the sovereignty consists in the selection of those on whom He “willeth to have mercy;” the punishment of those who are left in their sins and their wilful hardness of heart, being, just as much as if there had been *no* such selection of objects of mercy,—the judicial infliction of what is deserved,—the due reward of their deeds,—the strict and holy exercise of retributive justice.*

* It will be observed that *the 15th verse and the beginning of this* (v. 18th) are rendered by our translators in the same manner. The former of the two has been represented as one of the texts which have been *perverted*, when it has been interpreted as conveying the idea of *unconditional election* or *sovereign distinction in the salvation of sinners*. I have to beg your special attention,—although, indeed, no great measure of it will be required for a case so clear,—while I expose the fallacy, and the worse than fallacy, the manifest “deceitful handling of the word of God,”—in the attempt to prove its having been misunderstood and perverted. I am very unfond of bringing so heavy a charge against any one. But I should not feel as if I had been faithful to truth and to you, were I to speak otherwise. You shall judge. I give you the following exposition, and critical support of that exposition of the 15th verse:—“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

“The Apostle’s quotation is very expressive. In the original, it is not barely, ‘I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,’ but ‘I will have mercy on whom I *can* have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I *can* have compassion.’ Paul could not *misquote* the word of God; and this is the only *fair* translation of his words. Observe, my reader, how beautifully this accords with the first part of God’s answer—‘I will make all my *goodness* to pass before thee.’ It is surely goodness, to be gracious to whom he *can* be gracious. It is also specially remarkable, that, when he is to say, ‘Whom he will he hardeneth,’ he uses quite a different form of words. That clause *cannot* be translated ‘whom he *can* he hardeneth,’ because it is not so in the original.” Then we have, in a note, the critical defence of the translation of the 15th verse—“I will have mercy on whom *I can* have mercy.” This defence is founded on the use of the *subjunctive* or *potential mood* in the *second* occurrence of the verb, while the *future tense* is used in the first. I conceive the reasoning to be more than dubious—to be utterly inconclusive—that is founded on this circumstance. But, by entering into any discussion of it, I should seem as if I admitted its relevancy if it could be maintained. But what I have now to state will at once show you that it is not, and satisfy you that I have

not spoken too severely, when—I assure you not with the bitterness of controversy but with the seriousness of sorrow—I have represented the criticism as a “handling of the word of God deceitfully.” To the part of the *note* in question, containing the critical vindication of the rendering of the 15th verse, there is subjoined as follows:—“It has been thought fatal to the above translation, that it would lead us to render the last clause of verse 18th thus—‘Whom he **CAN** he hardeneth.’ But any one who compares the original verses will see the utter futility of the objection.” He then gives the original for the last clause of the 18th verse, and its only correct translation “Whom he **WILL**”—or whom he **WILLETH** he hardeneth:—and adds—with critical formality—“You perceive that the word *θέλει*, ‘he wills,’ or ‘he pleases,’ is used here, whereas a perfectly different word is used in verse 15. It would just be as far wrong to render this *he can*, as it is to render the other ‘I will have mercy.’ It will thus, I trust, appear that the Apostle’s words themselves take off the veil from this passage, and magnify the love of God.”

I am truly grieved to come out with what I have now to state to you. The text of the discourse from which I have taken the preceding extract is the *first clause* of the 18th verse. The author has the two verses in the original before him. He is comparing the one with the other. He begs his reader particularly to mark that the mode of expression in the *second clause* of verse 18th is altogether different from that used in verse 15th, intimating his admission that if the same word—“he willeth or he pleaseth”—had been used in the 15th verse, it would have been fatal to his translation and to his whole argument. But what all this while has become of the *first clause* of verse 18th—the clause which forms his very text? We have his own admission that the *second clause* of that verse *cannot* be translated “whom he *can* he hardeneth,” because it is not so in the original. Will you, then, believe me when I tell you, that the very identical word that is used in the *second clause* is also used in the *first*,—and that the words of his own text, which, in all this criticism, are never so much as mentioned—literally and strictly signify—“Therefore on whom he **WILLETH** he hath mercy?”—What becomes, then, of the criticism on the 15th verse? The Apostle, it is said, “could not *misquote* the word of God, and ‘I will have mercy on whom I **CAN** have mercy,’ is the only *fair* translation of his words:”—and yet when the Apostle comes to give his own explanation of the words he quotes, the explanation is in these terms—“*Therefore*,” or, “*so, then*, he hath mercy on whom he *willeth* to have mercy:”—and the words are such as, by the writer’s own admission, *cannot* be rendered otherwise!

Thus he takes for his text the first part of the 18th verse; but, instead of criticising it,—he leaves it for the 15th; tries to prove that that verse not only *may* but *ought* to be rendered **CAN** and not **will**; marks the difference between the terms of it and the terms of the latter part of the 18th; and conceals from his hearers and his readers all the while the fact that the first clause of that verse will not admit of being rendered *can* any more than the second.—If there is *perversion*, then, judge ye with whom it lies.

Even were the view of the passage given in the rendering of the

15th verse—"I will have mercy on whom I *can* have mercy"—admitted; or, in the explanatory terms of the writer referred to,—the position that "God will have mercy on all on whom it is *possible* for him to have mercy;"—to what, after all, will it amount?—It is admitted that He has "power enough to do whatsoever he pleases"—"an infinitude of mere power, beyond what is necessary to save man; but then, it is impossible for him to use this power inconsistently with wisdom and the great interests of the universe;"—and he uses his influence with men for their salvation "to the utmost extent to which his own honour and the interests of the universe will admit." To what, I say, does all this amount? If any man has any other idea of divine sovereignty than as a *wise* sovereignty,—a sovereignty guided in all its purposes and determinations by *reasons*,—reasons dictated by infinite "wisdom and prudence," and all in harmony with the interests of the universe and his own honour—he has an idea of it that is utterly unworthy of every right conception of the Divine Being, and at variance with all truth, whether tested by reason or by Scripture.

What, then, does all this reasoning about *can* instead of *will* avail? It is granted that God has *power* to save all: that in this sense He *can* save all. But then, all are not saved; and the reason assigned is, that "wisdom and righteousness limit the exercise of almighty power." Is this any thing else than the *sovereign exercise of his power to save*?—He puts forth his power to save *some*:—He *could* put it forth so as to save *all*:—but He does *not* do this:—and *why*? because He *cannot* do it "consistently with his own honour and the interests of the universe"—"consistently with the claims of wisdom and righteousness:"—that is, He *can* do it as to the possession of the power; but He *cannot* do it on *moral* grounds,—grounds connected with His moral administration over the universe.—Now, I have one question to ask—*How do we know* that God *cannot*, on such moral grounds, have mercy on *all*, and save all? Have we any reason whatever for believing that, in this moral sense, He *cannot*, beyond the *mere fact* that He *does not*? None whatever. He has not informed us of the reasons which exist in the depths of His infinite mind, for this part of His procedure. That there *are* such moral grounds, seen by Him to be sufficient,—and all consistent with wisdom, righteousness, and benevolence, we do not, and dare not doubt. But these reasons,—these moral grounds—are kept secret;—we know nothing of them. We know only the *matter of fact*: the rest is all matter of faith; and of faith, not resting on any discovery of God's reasons, but only on his *general character* as giving us assurance that he never acts *without* reasons. Now here it is, strictly and properly, that what we call *divine sovereignty* lies. It is not *caprice*.—[Extract from Sermon as above. The writer referred to is, if I mistake not, one of the Morisonian school. It seemed right to give the passage; it may be interesting to some; and useful, as showing the style of reasoning and criticism by which some of their views are sustained.—ED.]

LECTURE XLI.

ROMANS ix. 19—21.

“Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?”

THE Apostle takes up another objection. The principle of interpretation formerly noticed applies here in its full force. Had the doctrine taught in the passage been, that those who are saved, owe their salvation, or in other words, owe the difference between them and others to their own good dispositions, inclining them to the better improvement of the grace which they are supposed to have in common with all, there would not exist a hair's breadth of ground on which the question here proposed could rest:—“*Who hath resisted His will?*” or on which the inference could be drawn:—“*Why doth he yet find fault?*” On such a supposition, these are grounds which no man in his senses could think of taking, questions which could never be asked. For in that case, the will of God is, with regard to all, the very same. There exists, on the supposition, no absolute purpose as to any, but only one and the same conditional purpose to all; for the fulfilment of which grace is alike imparted to all. Now in that case, it must be self-evident, even to the weakest, that to nothing else whatever than the resisting of His will is it imaginable that the condemnation of any should be

imputed. How could it ever enter into any man's mind to ask:—"Who hath resisted his will?" if the Apostle's doctrine had been that the reason of a sinner's condemnation had no connexion whatsoever with any free purpose of God, but lay solely in his not improving the grace which was conferred on him as well as on others, and conferred on him for the very same end; putting it in his power, by the right improvement of that grace to save himself, in the very same way with those who actually do improve it to their salvation. The question, on such a supposition, would have been so palpably and grossly irrelevant and preposterous, that the Apostle could never have supposed it to be asked. The true spirit of the objection (and I am anxious to place it in its strongest light) is this:—"If it be indeed so, that God hath mercy on whom he will, and hardeneth whom he will;" if it does not depend on us, "not being of him that willetteth, or of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;" —then this will, this purpose, must stand; it cannot be counteracted: and seeing His will is, in every instance, fulfilled, and He himself is by this means glorified—"Why doth He yet find fault?" Why does He complain of his creatures, why does He condemn and punish them for not being what He has not purposed them to be, and what, therefore, (as they allege) they cannot be?—This is the objection, in the full force and spirit of it. And what is the ground taken by the Apostle in answering it? Let us look at it, in the different points of light in which it here comes before us.—

We have—

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1. The *presumptuous and perilous position which a creature, and which above all a sinner, takes up, in arguing against the divine procedure*:—"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"—"Against God;" that is, against the facts of His administration; the events of His providence; the declarations of His word;—and all as indicating the purposes of His mind.

The full spirit of this part of Paul's reply may be brought out, by taking it up in the two points of view which have been indirectly hinted at; by considering it, I mean, as

addressed to the objector in his two-fold capacity,—as a *man*, and as a *sinner*.

First :—Considering the appeal in the former of these two lights, it impresses very strongly a lesson of great practical importance, to which I have had occasion more than once on the present subject to advert—namely, to beware of arraigning, with irreverent rashness and self-sufficiency, the procedure of the Divine Being, as that procedure is represented to us by Himself. Nothing, surely, can be more unbecoming, in such a creature, or indeed in any creature. Nothing can more strikingly display the sad predominance in the human heart of that aspiring pride which was originally infused by the tempting assurance—“Ye shall be *as God*, knowing good and evil.” We cannot too frequently, or too strongly inculcate the reasonableness on the part of creatures, of expecting to find, in the counsels of the infinite Mind, many things beyond their comprehension. The folly, indeed, of refusing to admit whatever does *not* come within the limit of our comprehension, can be equalled only by its impiety. There may be—I had almost said, and I know not why I should not say it—there *must* be, parts of the divine procedure of which the principles and reasons are beyond the depth of even the arch-angelic intellects before the throne. It is a maxim of essential importance, on all such subjects, that we should not allow that which we *do* know, to be displaced from our confidence by that which we *do not* know. We have the fullest and clearest assurance of the perfect unimpeachable righteousness of the Supreme Ruler. That *God is righteous* ought to be as sure a truth with us as that *God exists*. Surely, then, we ought not to allow ourselves to be startled into incredulous wonder, or stumbled into universal scepticism, because, in His revealed procedure, we may find one and another particular, the secret of which we are unable fully to penetrate; of which we cannot unravel the intricacy, or totally dispel the darkness.—It is demonstrable, that the arguments against predestination to life hold equally good, in some of their strongest points, against the certainty of divine foreknowledge of future

events. Shall we, then, on the one hand, question the *prescience of God*, because we may be at a loss fully to discern its consistency with the freedom and accountableness of man?—or, on the other hand, shall we loose men from their moral responsibility, adopt the principles of fatalism, and convert them into mere irresponsible pieces of machinery, because we may not perfectly discern the link of harmony between man's accountableness and God's foreknowledge? And especially when we recollect, that the mystery of mysteries—that which may truly be said to include in it the united difficulties of all the rest,—is not a *doctrine*, but a *fact*,—not a discovery of revelation, but a permitted event in providence, independent of revelation altogether,—which revelation does not originate, but which it finds, and on which it proceeds,—*the existence of moral evil itself* under the government of the infinitely Holy and infinitely Good! There is no denying the fact; but the mystery of the fact has baffled the wits of the wisest from the beginning till now; and is still environed with questions which God himself can answer, but which He has not been pleased to answer *to us*. Shall we, then, refuse the provided and revealed *remedy* for the evil, because we cannot fully explain *why* the evil itself was permitted to exist? This were quite as reasonable and as modest, as to refuse to accept the statements of God respecting some parts of His procedure in the application of that remedy, because we cannot answer every question concerning it which scepticism may start. This were to refuse to submit our minds to divine dictation, because God has not imparted to these minds *his own intellect*:—“Nay but, O MAN, who art thou that repliest against God?”

But *secondly*:—The question of the Apostle is chiefly to be understood as addressed to man in his capacity as a SINNER. This is clear from its connexion with the preceding context,—“*Who art thou?*”—not only a creature—of limited apprehension, short-sighted, and ignorant,—but a sinful, guilty, unworthy, justly condemned creature—“Who art thou that repliest against God?” How unspeakably unreasonable and presumptuous is the language of the objector when regarded

in *this* light?—And here we might introduce anew, with augmented force and impressiveness, the proper terms for such a creature in presenting himself before “the God with whom he has to do.”—Of *whom* ought he, then, to think? Should it not be of *himself*? Of *what* ought he to think? Should it not be of *his own* transgressions and *his own* deserts? He has an account of his own:—what to him are the accounts of others? Is he to stand out against the justice of God in his own sentence, till he sees whether God deals with others exactly as He does with *him*? What has he to do with others? As a sinner, he stands at the bar of heaven, charged with his own guilt, and has to answer for himself. If there be any ground on which he can impeach the righteousness of the Judge in his own sentence, let him advance his plea. But if he himself, as a sinner, is justly condemned, is not the posture that becomes him that of prostration before his Judge, as a suppliant for mercy? O! if instead of “repenting against God,” by presuming to pick faults in His general administration, each sinner would but “look to himself,”—ponder his own guilt,—and in the name of the one divine Mediator, cast himself at the feet of his Judge with the brief petition of the publican,—“God be merciful!”—all would then be well. He should find mercy, as sure as God “delighteth in it;” and, because He delighteth in it, has provided for its honourable exercise.

But in order to the full explanation of the question before us, in this view of it, it will be indispensably necessary to direct our attention to the illustration of the import of it which is immediately introduced by the Apostle himself:—verses 20, 21. “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?”

These questions and allusions have by some been sadly misunderstood; and, through the misunderstanding of them, have been made to support positions which they are so far from having been intended to maintain, that the Apostle would have shrunk from the conclusions with indignant hor-

ror. They have seriously perplexed many a thoughtful and even devoutly inclined mind; and alas! they have been made the point of a merry jest by many a profane and reckless spirit. "O," say they, "God, it seems, makes some men that he may save them, and others that he may damn them. There it must lie. We can no more help it, than one piece of clay can help being made after one fashion, and another piece after another." Dear brethren, the subject is a serious one. We have all to do with God. Consequences of the most momentous description are involved in the relation we bear to Him, and the character in which we shall appear before Him,—consequences affecting the eternity of our being. It is not, therefore, a matter to be thus lightly and carelessly disposed of. Were it even as such objectors represent it, it would still be serious,—no topic for an idle jest. Let it, then, be carefully observed *what the subject is*, of which the Apostle here treats. He is not speaking at all with reference to man's *creation*, or of any purposes of God respecting him *as a creature*. He is speaking of God's purposes and dealings with men, *as they now exist*, in their fallen, guilty state;—speaking of them as *sinners*. He does not speak of a purpose to *make men sinners*. But all *being* sinners, he speaks of a divine purpose to extend mercy to some sinners, and to punish others who are also sinners. And the question is—*whether God has a right to do so*;—and *whether any sinner on earth has a right to complain of God, if He does so?*—It is of essential consequence that this be specially marked and borne in mind. It is *the* point, and the *only* point.

The principle of the explanation, and of the application of the figure as a justification of the Supreme Judge,—lies in the phrase "*of the same lump*." The reference here is not, in the remotest degree, to the fact of man's having originally been made from "*the dust of the earth*"; nor the sentiment intended to be conveyed by such allusion, that God the Creator is at liberty, as it may please Him, to *make* one creature to sin and misery, and another to purity and happiness. The reference, as I have said, is not to *creation*, or bringing

into existence at all, but to *sinners*. The different vessels, in the comparison, are made “of the same lump:” and on this one circumstance depends entirely the aptness of the allusion, and the conclusiveness of the reasoning. All, without exception, are to be regarded as “*of one lump*,”—all as belonging to the same common mass of sinfulness or corruption;—“there being no difference,—all having sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Abraham, the chosen father of the faithful and friend of God, of the same lump with his kindred beyond the flood, who served other gods;—Isaac of the same lump with Ishmael; Jacob with Esau; Moses with Pharaoh; Peter and John and Paul with Judas the traitor and “son of perdition;” all that shall be saved, with all that shall be lost. The universality of corruption and guiltiness is the essential principle of the whole argument,—the basis on which it rests,—the hinge on which it turns. The God of holiness and justice and goodness, can neither make a creature with evil principles, nor infuse evil principles into any creature already existing; and to neither of these things has the comparison reference. Both are alike inadmissible,—alike abhorrent to every honourable conception of the divine character.

Of a mass of clay of the same quality, the potter has *power*—that is, he has *right*,—not mere *ability*, but *right* or *title* (for such is the proper import of the original word here used)* to frame one vessel for a more and another for a less honourable use. And nothing can well be imagined more absurd, than the idea of “the thing formed saying to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?”—as if the piece of clay which was made into a vessel for a meaner purpose had possessed any *previous title* to be made into one of a higher description! This, I repeat, is the sole and entire point in the comparison. It is just a further illustration of the great truth formerly insisted upon,—that among those who sustain the common character of sinners, and who, as such, are all alike undeserving and destitute of claim,—the

* *ἴκενσια*, not *δύναμις*.

“blessed and only Potentate,” being a debtor to none, has a sovereign and indisputable right to confer His favours—and among the rest the blessing of pardon,—“according to the good pleasure of his will,”—in other words—“to have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and compassion on whom he will have compassion.” We have (chap. vi. 23,) the brief statement—“The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Does the bestowment of the *gift* of life upon some render the death to others less than before the wages of their sin? No one will be at a loss to answer the question.

How shocking, then, in *this* view of the case, is the question—“Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?” How fearful to think of a poor sinful guilty creature, whose rightful wages is the second death, presuming to vindicate himself to his Maker, Governor, and Judge, on the ground that he has not resisted *His will that he should suffer for his sins!*—pleading that his sins have only led to the fulfilment of divine purposes, and the manifestation of the divine glory.

First of all—*this is not, in any case, true.* There is no such sinner,—no sinner that does *not* resist this part of the divine will. There is in every one a secret,—as there has been in some a frightfully avowed, rebellion of heart against it. The very questions here supposed,—what are they else than the utterance of this spirit? What are they but the murmurings of indignant dissatisfaction,—of guilty creatures unsubmissive to their sentence, though conscious of deserving it, and recklessly throwing the blame of their perdition on their Maker?—comforting themselves in a kind of fatalism by which their destiny was sealed?—as if that destiny were anything else whatever than the merited punishment of their own voluntary course of impenitence and sin!

I might further ask—Was it ever in the purpose of any sinner to provide by his conduct for the manifestation of the divine glory? Did he ever mean so, or his heart think so? Did ever sinner transgress, and multiply transgression, in order that the God against whom he offended might be

glorified in his destruction? Into what poor sinner's calculation did such a result ever enter?—The truth is, that sinners *do* resist the will of God—resist it, both in the intimations of it in the precepts of His law themselves,—and in the threatenings of punishment annexed to their infraction. They hate both the Law and its sanctions. They throw off the restraints of the one, treating both commands and prohibitions with contumacious unsubmitteness; and they, at the same time, spurn at, disbelieve, or laugh to scorn the announcements of the other.

And yet, my friends, *these* are the views of the *divine will*, with which alone we, as God's intelligent creatures, and the subjects of His moral government, have to do. His secret purposes (as we have more than once had occasion to notice, but it cannot be too often urged upon attention) are known only to himself. They are the rule of His conduct,—the plan of procedure lying before His own infinite mind; but they are not, and in the nature of things never can be, either rule or plan for ours. As moral agents, we have nothing whatever to do with them. Our business is, in no respect, with *this* department of the divine will; it is solely with the other—with what God has revealed; with the *Law* and with the *Gospel*,—that is, with God's *will* for our *duty* as *creatures*; and with God's *will* for our *salvation* as *sinful creatures*. O! it were well, if men would but attend to these,—and let the unrevealed purposes of the divine mind alone, as matters at once too high for them, and, at the same time, altogether unconnected with their moral responsibility.

When God inflicted punitive judgments upon His ancient people, He expresses, in one place, the intended effect of them in these terms—“If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they accept of the punishment of their iniquity.” Now something like this is the state of mind into which sinners require to be brought, in regard to their sentence by the divine Law. They are not yet suffering the punishment; but they are under the sentence. And their “uncircumcised hearts must be humbled,” so as to own, in prostration of spirit, the righteousness of that sentence—the sentence against

their own sins—against *themselves*, irrespectively altogether of the divine dealings with others; and to accept the punishment of their iniquity, as threatened though not inflicted,—as in sentence, though not in execution. The spirit in the passage before us is the very opposite of this. It is the spirit of unsubmissive stout-heartedness, or of careless and profane indifference,—both alike inconsistent with the proper spirit of a sinner before the God with whom he has to do. Till there is a broken-hearted submission to the sentence of the Law, as a just and a personal sentence, there cannot be the true acceptance of the grace of the Gospel. And it is questionable whether, until there is a full and entire acquiescence in the perfectly sovereign freeness of God's pardoning mercy, and his absolute right to "dispense it to every man severally as he will,"—whether, so long as this absolute sovereignty of God in the exercise of His pardoning mercy, is reviled as *partiality*,—and sinners are encouraged in the thought that right views of the *love* and of the *justice* of God require that He should regard and treat all men alike, and that they would have some reason for dissatisfaction and complaint if He did not,—whether, I say, while views such as these are held, there is a sufficiently complete bowing of the mind to the divine prerogative,—a sufficiently humble acquiescence in the rectitude and fairness of the sinner's *own* condemnation. So long as he thinks at all of the case of others as in the least degree affecting his own,—it may be doubted if he has fully submitted himself to the "righteousness of God" in his own sentence. There is something wanting to the completeness of the surrender.

A most extraordinary and perverse attempt has been made, to identify the lesson taught by Paul in his allusion to the potter, with that taught by Jeremiah in a similar allusion.* Now, because the prophet Jeremiah had, for a special purpose—for the impressing of a special lesson, made a reference to the trade of the potter,—the conclusion is, that Paul, in making a similar reference, must needs intend by it

* See Jer. xviii. 1—10

to teach the very same lesson;—as if the same act might not be referred to, under different aspects of it, for the illustration and enforcement of different principles!—Nay, more than this;—Paul must needs be considered as referring to the parable as it stands in the prophet,—as in effect quoting from Jeremiah; and the inference of course is, that whatever we find to have been the sense of the parable in the prophet, we are bound to attach the same sense to the comparison of the Apostle. A more *unreasonable* position there could not be; and a position more manifestly *false in point of fact* there could not be. That the Apostle might have the passage of the prophet in his mind at the time, is not at all unlikely, though even this much, when he hints at nothing of the kind, it is gratuitous to assume. And as to the conclusion of the identity of the lesson, it is *unreasonable* on the ground already mentioned, that the same act may surely admit of allusions that are not the same, nor for the same end. And it is *false in point of fact*, as to any attentive and considerate reader must appear on the most superficial perusal of the two passages. The lesson conveyed by the passage in Jeremiah is the correspondence of the divine conduct towards men—*nations* particularly, though the *principle* of the lesson may be applicable to individuals—with the influence which God's word, whether of promise or of threatening, has upon them. He will turn from threatened evil, if his threatening produces repentance and submission; and He will turn from promised good, if those to whom He promises it, instead of persevering in obedience, rebel and do evil. The threatening implies a reserve of mercy to the penitent;—the promise implies the requisition of continual obedience. The whole passage in Jeremiah refers to *the same parties in changing circumstances*; just as, in the comparison, it is *one piece of clay* treated first in *one way*, and then in *another*. I cannot imagine an instance of either greater indiscrimination or greater perversity, than the attempt to make it out that this is the lesson taught by Paul,—namely, that each individual sinner is, in God's treatment of him, like a piece of clay put by the potter upon the wheels; and after every possible

means have been used, and power and skill put forth to make of him a vessel to honour, he is still “marred,”—and, all divine means, and influence, and effort having thus failed, he is made “a vessel unto dishonour!” The truth is, that this is neither the lesson taught by the Prophet nor that taught by the Apostle, but a different one from either, derived from a third variety in the same allusion.—But taking simply the comparison used by Jeremiah and that used by Paul, the difference is most manifest. It is alleged that, because in the comparison as used by Jeremiah there is *no division of the clay*; that is, there are not different vessels made out of different portions of the same lump or mass; but of the same portion *a vessel attempted to be made*, and, the attempt failing, the clay giving way and the vessel being marred, *another actually made*. Now, let any reader look at this chapter of the Romans, and say whether it be indeed so that Paul is not speaking of any distinction between different persons as to God’s purposes concerning them or treatment of them,—but of his varying treatment of the same persons in change of circumstances,—doing what He can with them to make them vessels of one description,—and after doing all in His power for this end, turning them into vessels of another description! Is this really the meaning of “making one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?” Are there not here, as plainly as language can express it, *two vessels made*,—one to one use, and another to another? And does not this correspond with the entire context? Are there not different persons and different classes of persons from beginning to end?—“the children of the flesh” and “the children of the promise;” were these the same persons first treated in one way, and, that being tried in vain, treated in another? Jacob and Esau; were they the same person under different circumstances and modes of treatment? Jacob, Esau upon the wheels to be made a vessel unto honour, and Esau, Jacob marred and rejected, and turned into a vessel unto dishonour?

And then have we not the distinction between those on whom God “wills to have mercy” and those whom He “wills to harden?” and, in correspondence with the terms of our text,

the distinction, in the twenty-second and twenty-third verses, between the *vessels of wrath* and the *vessels of mercy* :—were these the same parties under different modes of treatment? The supposition is self-contradictory and absurd.—I am not speaking of the tenableness or untenableness of the lesson alleged to be taught in the passage,—the lesson of sinners being, in God's treatment of them, put upon the wheels for the purpose of making them honourable vessels, and then, when He can do no more for them, changing his hand, and framing them for dishonour and destruction. The present question is not whether this, in itself, be a Bible lesson. It may, or it may not. The question is—*Is it the lesson of this passage?* And the man who will deliberately say *it is*, I should deliberately relinquish every attempt to convince of any truth whatever. If there be not here a distinction of persons,—and that distinction a distinction made by the sovereignty of God in the exercise of his mercy, I must despair of ever arriving at certainty respecting the meaning of any passage from the beginning to the end of the Bible.

If there be here what is “hard to be understood,” it does not lie in any want of plainness in the Apostle's statements, but solely in some of the mysterious bearings of *the truth itself that is taught*,—simply and clearly taught. That truth, I repeat, is the sovereignty of God in the exercise of mercy to His guilty creatures. Surely the simple question with every such creature ought to be—*Have I any claim upon that mercy?* And if, the moment he puts the question into words, he perceives and feels the contradiction it involves in the very terms of it,—seeing the very ideas of *mercy* and of *claim* mutually destroy each other,—what should come next? Should the poor sinner, instead of bowing at once to his sentence, and casting himself down at the feet of his offended Sovereign, yielding himself to the stroke of His justice, as that which he deserves if that Sovereign is pleased to inflict it, sensible and owning that it would be no more than his due,—yet, as an humble, contrite, broken-hearted suppliant, suing for mercy,—suing for it in the way and on the terms in which God has been

pleased to reveal it, (a posture in which no sinner was ever received otherwise than graciously—to the very bosom of the God of love,) shall the poor sinner, instead of this,—the part which so immediately and so manifestly becomes him,—set himself to argue with his Maker and Judge respecting the great abstract principles of His government; insist upon having everything in these satisfactorily explained, and brought down to the level of his capacity?—shall he make his own submission, and suing for or accepting mercy, depend upon his being given to know whether God had any purpose of mercy towards him or towards others from eternity,—whether He deals with all alike,—whether He gives an influence to one which He withholds from another, and, if He does, whether and on what ground it is right for Him to do so? Is this the way in which a poor sinful, guilty, justly condemned, helpless and hopeless creature, should deal with his God?—“replying against Him,”—demanding explanations,—insisting upon terms?

Dear fellow-sinners, be humble; be submissive; be thankful:—*humble*, under a consciousness of *your own* guilt,—*submissive*, to the righteousness of your own sentence,—*thankful*, that the voice of mercy has come to your own ears, that provision is made for your own case. *To you* God makes known His mercy through an atoning Redeemer:—*to you* He offers pardon, in the name and for the sake of that Redeemer:—*to you* He says, “Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?” Will you not believe God in earnest, unless He will give you to understand the connexion and the consistency between His invitations and His purposes? What is this but saying, that you will accept His mercy—that you will submit to His terms,—when He vouchsafes to give you His own intellect,—and to place you on an equality with Himself! Again I say—*be humble*. Give up your presumptuous questions. You cannot puzzle God by them; but you may easily and ruinously bewilder yourselves. Take God at his word. He calls you. Come to Him. And, as surely as He lives, you shall not be “cast out.”

LECTURE XLII.

ROMANS ix. 22—24.

“ What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

In last Lecture I brought before you the spirit of the objection supposed by Paul to be adduced against his doctrine of the sovereignty of God in the exercise of mercy:—and I illustrated the import, and showed the relevancy of the Apostle’s reply,—whether considered as addressed to the objector in the capacity of a *man*, or in the capacity of a *sinner*;—and pointed out especially the true meaning and point of the comparison drawn by the Apostle from the “potter and the clay;”—how the aptness of the comparison lay in the vessels being made “*of the same lump*;” from which it appeared that it was only an additional illustration of the sovereignty of God in exercising pardoning mercy, and otherwise bestowing special favours, when all without exception are sinful and guilty, destitute of claim, and liable to punishment.

What has formerly been said on this point—which is the leading point of the Apostle’s entire argument,—will go far towards explaining and vindicating the true spirit of these verses. The language however, is peculiar,—and requires a little further and more direct explanation for itself.

* Ver. 19.

You will at once perceive that it is *elliptical* :—that is, the sense is *not complete*, but *left to be filled up* :—“What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?” “*What if*” he did what is mentioned, and did it with the designs, or for the ends, specified? This is not a complete sentiment. A supposition is made—“What if God did so and so?”—but the question involving the supposition is left without an answer. Supposing God to have done so, and to have done it for certain ends—*what then?*—*what would follow?*—The Apostle does not fill up the sentence himself, but leaves it to be filled up by his readers agreeably to the principles he had been laying down.—*What then?* would there be unrighteousness with God? Would God violate any claim existing on the part of any of His creatures?—would He act inconsistently with any principle of His government?—would He leave any ground of just complaint against His procedure,—any reason, on the part of a single subject of His government, to say he had been wronged,—whether positively or negatively—by inflicting, or by withholding?

As this appears the obvious spirit of the hypothetical question, it becomes of the greatest importance that we correctly understand the principles on which God is here supposed to act—the course He is represented as pursuing.

For the sake of distinctness, we may divide our observations under *three heads* :—1. *The parties spoken of* :—2. *The conduct of God toward them* :—and 3. *The supposed design, or object of that conduct*.

1. **THE PARTIES SPOKEN OF.**—They are two classes of persons; and they are spoken of according to the figure in the preceding verse. They are—“*vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction* ;”—and “*vessels of mercy, prepared unto glory*.”

Who, then, are these respectively?

(1.) “*The vessels of wrath*.” I have already said—and it is very evident—that in this designation there is a reference to the previous figure. The *vessels of wrath* in this verse are

the same with the “*vessels to dishonour*” in the verse preceding. We have before explained the true spirit and application of the figure there used; and need not repeat what has been said. But as to the designation “*vessels of wrath*,” let the following things be carefully attended to.

First: The wrath of God is invariably pointed *against sin*—or against *men as guilty of sin*.*—The wrath, then, is *judicial wrath*; not *personal passion and vindictiveness*, but the *wrath of justice*—*righteousness demanding the punishment of iniquity*—“angry with the wicked,” and insisting on the execution of the law. *Sovereign wrath* there cannot be. It is a perfect contradiction. *Sovereign mercy* is not. It conveys to the mind not only an idea consistent with itself, but a truth inexpressibly precious and delightful. It expresses the unquestionable prerogative, the unalienable right, of the Supreme Ruler to show favour freely to the undeserving. The very word *mercy*, as distinguished from the more general term *goodness*, or *benevolence*, implies *guilt* and *desert of evil*, on the part of those who are the objects of it. But from every such idea as that of the right of God to inflict suffering on the innocent and undeserving of it, we shrink with horror. We are sensible in a moment that this is the ascription to God of a *right to do wrong*—of a description of sovereignty, which, instead of being honourable, it would be blasphemous, to impute to Him. All suffering—all punitive infliction—presupposes *desert*. The bestowment of good does not. If it did, there could not possibly be any good either in our own or in any other sinful world. All in such a world would necessarily be curse,—all evil. The latter, then, the bestowment of good, belongs to *sovereignty*; the former, the infliction of evil, belongs to *equity*. The distinction is one of the first importance. It cannot be too closely kept in mind. It clears away much embarrassment and difficulty. If there be a single mind to which it does not instantly commend itself, it must be owing to some misconception in that mind of the proper meaning of *sovereignty*. But I feel I am unable to

* As a specimen of many passages, see Rom. i. 18; Eph. ii. 1—3.

make the distinction plainer. Let it be understood, then, as a settled point, that the wrath of God is invariably *against sin* and against its *wilful perpetrators*. Then—

2. The sins of men are *freely committed*. They are the effects and indications of evil dispositions of heart;—and they are done with the free consent and choice of their wills. No sin could expose to wrath otherwise:—nay, otherwise, there could be no such thing as sin at all; all sin implying, in the very idea of it, the consent of the will. The very essence of all that is sinful lies in this. If a man were used, either by God or by a fellow-creature, as a mere physical machine, he could not be a sinner. Now, every man who sins, sins with his will. Make what you like of God's secret purposes, it is a matter of fact which there is no questioning, that they do, in no way and in no degree, interfere with the perfect liberty of the agent. Every sinner is sensible that he acts from choice; that neither, on the one hand, is he *constrained to evil*, nor, on the other, *restrained from good*. To say, in regard to the latter—that which is *good*—that man *cannot will* it, is to employ terms most inconsiderate and misleading. What *hinders* him from willing? It is obvious that the word *cannot* must mean a *moral inability*. It is neither more nor less than the absence of *right dispositions*. But the *indisposition* to that which is good is just, in other words, the *want of will* to that which is good; and, there being no other inability whatever in man than this moral inability—this unwillingness,—to say he *cannot will* resolves itself ultimately into he *will not will*; inasmuch as he is kept from *willing good* by nothing but his *aversion to good*. All that can properly be meant by human freedom is the absence of all *constraint* and of all *restraint*. Man is at liberty to do whatever he wills:—and if he does not *will good*, what is it that prevents him but his *love of evil*? He likes evil, and dislikes good; and therefore, in practice, chooses and does the one, and rejects and refrains from doing the other. These are truths sufficiently plain and simple:—and they serve to show the meaning of the expression which follows—“*fitted to destruction*.” What means this?

It is, first of all, obvious that more is meant than mere *destination* or *appointment*,—on whatever ground. “*Fitted*”* includes particularly the idea of *congruity*—of what may be termed a *connexion of propriety* or *adaptedness*, between the character and the destruction; something about the parties which rendered their destruction *fit*, and, on the principles of judicial retribution, *inevitable*. The question, then, comes to be—*how* are they thus “*fitted?*”—by *whom* are they thus “*fitted?*” Is it by *God*? or is it by *themselves*? Is it by an *arbitrary providence*, or is it by *their sins*? In finding an answer to this question, I have to entreat you specially to observe the marked difference between the expression used on this side of the alternative, and that used on the other. In the one case it is only said—“*fitted for destruction*,” without affirming *how* or *by whom*.† But in the other the expression is, distinctly—“*whom he hath afore prepared unto glory*.” Thus, in regard to the “*vessels of mercy*,” God is expressly represented as the agent by whom the preparation, or fitness, is effected:—but in regard to the vessels of wrath, this is *not* affirmed; they are only “*fitted for destruction*.” Are we not, by this very variation of expression, naturally led to understand the Apostle as intending to convey to us the idea of a difference? He does not say—“*the vessels of wrath, which he had afore prepared, or fitted, for destruction*.” The meaning, therefore, in this case, seems to be, that they were *self-fitted*, or, in other words, fitted by their impenitent and obdurate sinfulness. If the phrase can at all be considered as referring to God, and signifying fitted *by Him*,—then the only sense in which, when so used, it can possibly be understood, is a sense analogous to that in which He is represented in the previous verses as “*hardening*”—namely, that God *leaves sinners to fit themselves “for destruction,” to become fit for it by their sins*. The blessed God *cannot* be regarded as directly “*fiting men for destruction*” by any *influence from Him*. In

* Κατηρτισμένα.

† “Non dicit quae προκατήρτισε, cum tamen ver. seq. dicat quae προ-
paravit.” Bengel.—Ed.

His own word this is disowned in the most pointed terms;* and, as the Apostle does use different modes of expression, it is better,—even although, in the sense just mentioned, “fitted to destruction” *might* be understood of God,—to regard it as meaning fitted *by their sins*, fitted *by themselves*. It was in this way of old that the inhabitants of Jerusalem are represented by the prophet as fitting themselves for destruction, as fuel for the fire.† Jehovah did not fit them; but, when by themselves “fitted,” he destined them, in justice, to what was their desert.

And here I may take occasion to notice, that, as God cannot *make men wicked* by any infusion of evil principles,—so neither should He be considered as *appointing men to sin*,—unless it be in the simple sense of leaving them, in judicial and punitive abandonment, to the hardening influence of its wilful perpetration. In the Epistle of Jude, verse *fourth*, it is said—“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” *To what were these men ordained?*—to the *condemnation*. And *for what were they so ordained?*—beyond question, on the ground of their *character*, as in the passage it is portrayed.

Secondly :—with “the vessels of wrath” stand contrasted “the vessels of mercy.” And respecting these, there are two things to be observed:—1. The very idea of *mercy* excludes, as we have had occasion repeatedly to notice, all *desert* on *their* part, and all *obligation* on the part of *God*. The very designation—“vessels of mercy” implies that whatever there may be of good included in it, that good is something which they do not deserve, and which God is, in no respect, bound to bestow. Then—2. This being the case, their previous “preparation to glory” is an act of *pure sovereignty*. We understand the phrase as including the eternal purpose of God respecting them, and the following up of that purpose in time by the effectual inward operation of his “free Spirit,”

* James i. 13—16.

† Ezek. xv. 6—8.

accompanying the word and other means, changing their hearts, carrying forward their progressive sanctification,—“making them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” *Here is the proper province of sovereignty.* It makes thus the difference among sinners, who are all alike undeserving of favour. “One is taken and another left.” He who is left, is left only to the equitable consequences of his own sins. He who is taken, is taken in absolute divine free-will, to the unmerited enjoyment of “glory, honour, and immortality”—of “eternal life, as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

2. We notice now, *secondly, the conduct of God towards both the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy.* This will not require to be dwelt upon at any length. It might indeed admit of lengthened illustration; but it requires no proof. It is necessary, however, to observe, because it may not at once be to some apparent,—that the conduct of God to which I now refer is *the same to both*, while the ultimate design as to each (a design to be afterwards considered) is *different*. The conduct towards *both* is—His “*enduring them with much long-suffering.*” This, I apprehend, is here represented as His procedure toward both the “vessels of wrath” and the “vessels of mercy.” The expression is used, it is true, only in reference to the former; but it is necessary, to complete the sense, that it be, as it were, *carried forward*, and considered as if repeated, in regard to the latter. “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory,” *did in like manner to them*,—“endured *them* also with much long-suffering.”

The long-suffering and forbearing patience of God with men, is one of the most wonderful facts in the history of our apostate race. It was manifested in His dealings with the

* The sovereignty of mercy in thus preparing sinners to glory is finely and fully set forth—Eph. ii. 1—10.

antediluvian world. It was manifested in the whole course of His procedure toward the Jewish people. It has been manifested all along, and continues to be, in the experience of the race at large over all the earth: and it is manifested in the life of every individual. Who is there, of all the children of men, that is not the subject of it?

It is evident, that the idea of “patience and long-suffering” implies the existence of a tendency in a contrary direction, arising from something in the nature or character of the Being by whom it is exercised; and that the difficulty of its exercise bears proportion to the strength of that tendency. Now, the *holiness* of God is infinitely opposed to all sin. He hates it with a hatred that is properly and absolutely infinite. “He is of purer eyes than to behold evil; neither can he look upon iniquity.” And while his holiness abhors it, his justice calls for its punishment,—its punishment to the full extent of its deserts. In proportion, then, to the strength of these principles of the divine character, is the *difficulty* (if it be lawful so to express it) of forbearance with those by whom it is practised—the workers of iniquity. By considering the amount of evil, thought, and felt, and said, and done in this world of ours, every successive moment,—I might set the amount of the long-suffering of a holy God before your minds in many and impressive lights. But I must forbear:—it would lead me too far away from my one point.

Now, by this long-suffering, the great majority of men, alas! are only encouraged in evil,—hardened in their unbelief, and impenitence, and ungodly courses: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”* They thus criminally, because wilfully, and from the love of evil, abuse the divine goodness; and, by the abuse of it, “fit themselves for destruction:”—“Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart,

* Eccl. viii. 11.

treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."* Others, dealt with in the same "long-suffering," are at times, after very protracted and obstinate resistance of the means of grace—of the word and providence of God—His word in all its variety of appeals and motives, and His providence in all its variety of dispensations, prosperous and adverse,—subdued to repentance,—"turned to God." Their hearts relent, they believe, and are saved. Toward *both* of these classes of persons, there has been shown, on the part of God, "much long-suffering." To many a believer—especially to such as have been converted later in life than others,—might I make my appeal for the truth of this. Many a heart would melt, and many an eye would glisten with the tear of shame and of humble and grateful joy, in recollecting the past and comparing it with the present; and reflecting how long they held out against a long-suffering God:—ay, and to many an unbelieving sinner, now going on in his trespasses, in despite of the patience of a holy, sin-hating, but merciful God, who is still "waiting to be gracious," might I make a similar appeal;—an appeal to which, whatever impression it might make, or fail to make upon his *heart*, his *conscience* would secretly, and faithfully, and perhaps stingingly, respond. But I must not keep longer from my last particular; which it is the Apostle's principal object to illustrate and impress. I notice, then—

3. The *design* or *object* of this conduct of God, here *supposed* by the Apostle:—the *end* hypothetically imputed to Him, in both the cases—the case of the "vessels of wrath," and the case of "the vessels of mercy."

And here we must consider yet again the connexion with what goes before. "The potter" shows his "power over the clay"—not his *ability* merely but his *right*—by making, as he pleases, out of the common mass, "one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour." *Suppose*, then (argues the Apostle) God does as the potter does: showing His sover-

* Rom. ii. 4, 5.

eign right to dispose of the common mass of corruption as He pleases, in the way which He sees will, in every way, most contribute to the glory of His own name:—*Suppose this: "what if" this were the case?*—It is evident that the question of supposition is intended to involve another question, founded on the supposition, namely—*Would there*, in that case, be any ground of complaint? Where would it lie? Who, with any just cause, could say a single word against the procedure? Now, my friends, let me keep you in mind;—this still proceeds upon the same assumption as before,—that men are not here spoken of at all *as creatures*, but *as sinners*,—guilty subjects of God's moral government, breakers of His law,—*all* such, and therefore *all* not only alike without claim, but alike obnoxious to the visitation of His punitive justice.

The general principle, then, is this—that God, the supreme ruler, in His rectoral procedure towards sinful men,—so orders that procedure, as that He may most effectually, in the end, secure, illustrate, and magnify, the glory of His own character and government;—so as that He may bring out, in conspicuous manifestation, as the object of admiration and the subject of praise to the assembled myriads of men and angels,—the rectitude, on the one hand, of the final doom of the impenitent; and, on the other, the free and rich grace of His people's salvation.

Let us look at both sides of the alternative. And let our sole object, in regard to each, be—to ascertain *what it is which the inspired Apostle plainly teaches.* With this, and this alone, we have to do.

1. In God's long-suffering towards those who ultimately perish, what is supposed His course? He lengthens out their period of trial. He places them in various circumstances. He applies every mode of treatment, in itself, as a moral means, fitted to bring them to repentance. In doing this, He provides for a clear and satisfactory display of righteousness in their final condemnation; so that none may have it in their power to say that they perished unwarmed, untried, uninvited,—unfairly, summarily, or harshly treated. In the

forbearance of God, they have found opportunity for repentance, and they have guiltily misimproved it; converting it into an opportunity of further and further showing the evil principles and dispositions by which they are actuated, and which are the grounds of their sentence of death in the judgment. As an exemplification of our meaning, take the case before alluded to, of the flood. By that fearful catastrophe, God might truly be said to "show his wrath and make His power known" against the ungodly antediluvian world. But He previously so ordered matters as to make it manifest what good grounds He had for the awful vengeance. His long-suffering "waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing." The days of forbearance with them were "a hundred and twenty years." He thus gave them warning, and gave them time. He sent to them his inspired "preacher of righteousness," to call them to repentance. He set before them, in the building of the ark by His command, the evidence of His being in earnest, as well as of the strength and permanence of His believing servant's faith. He thus cleared the way for "showing his wrath and making his power known" in their overthrow:—and in the previous manifestation of the desert of the sufferers, He prepared a full vindication of the righteousness of His procedure. He afforded them space for repentance; but they only "fitted themselves" in it "for destruction."* The tendency and design in God's rectoral administration, of the "waiting of his long-suffering in the days of Noah," and of the preaching of the patriarch, was to awaken to timely consideration, and bring to repentance:—and such is the tendency and design of His long-suffering toward *all*. When it is abused, the blame lies, not with God, but with the sinners themselves. The difficulty in regard to God's actually using these means, is the same on every theory *we* can form. He *does* use them; and yet it were as foolish as impious to deny that He uses them *knowing the result*,—*knowing that they are to fail*,—and knowing that, when they *do* fail, they must aggravate condemnation. These are *points of fact*, such

* Compare 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20; and 2 Pet. iii. 9.

as cannot without atheism be questioned. And I repeat the hazard of our arguing against *indubitable facts* in the divine administration. To say that in every case God does all that He *can* to effect the conversion and salvation of the sinner, is to say what is, in an important sense, manifestly untrue:—for there can be no truth more certain than that there is no heart which it is beyond *divine power* to change. In this as in every other department of His administration—“With God all things are possible.” And to say that He does all that He *can* “consistently with his own honour and the interests of the universe,” is to say, what is indeed a truth,—but what is nothing to the purpose,—what does not, in the remotest degree, so much as *mitigate* the difficulty:—for who, on any theory, doubts it? It is only saying that He *does not do* what He assuredly *could do*, because, while it is a thing which He is, on no ground and by no principle whatever, *bound* to do, there are reasons secret to us, but satisfactory to His own infinite mind, why He should *not do* it.

And as it was with the antediluvian sinners, so was it with the Jewish people. God’s judgments on them were not only deserved, but by His whole procedure toward them, *shown to be deserved* ere they were inflicted. So that He many a time appeals to themselves, on this very ground, for the justice of their judicial visitations,—their penal abandonment and sufferings. Their “mouths were stopped.”

And thus it will be at last. God the Judge has determined, that He will not only *be* just in His sentences of condemnation, but *show Himself just*; ordering all His previous procedure in such a way, as to bring out the demonstration of His unimpeachable righteousness. He cannot “show his wrath and make his power known” in any way that is *unrighteous*;—and what is here affirmed is—that His providence so orders the circumstances of those who are finally condemned as to make it apparent to all that His wrath and power are in perfect harmony with equity. Who will venture to find fault with this?

Of the other side of the alternative the import is sufficiently obvious:—“And that he might make known the riches of

his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." The "*riches of his glory*" evidently signifies here "*his glorious riches*"—and that means, as evidently, the *riches of his mercy*. The glorious riches of God's mercy are made known by salvation in general having been provided; by the means of its provision; and by every individual instance of salvation bestowed. The display of "*the riches of his mercy*," and its divine sovereignty and freeness, is one of the designs of God in the very constitution of the Gospel, and in its actual application to the conversion and salvation of sinners.

But "*the riches of his mercy*" are more signally displayed in some cases of salvation, than in others:—and God, the God of grace, so orders matters in His providence, in bringing sinners to himself and to life,—in framing "*vessels of mercy*" from the corrupt mass of fallen humanity—as to bring out, in individual cases, and upon the whole, the most complete and glorious manifestation of free, rich, sovereign, everlasting mercy. In particular cases, by His "*forbearance and long-suffering*," He prepares wonderful exemplifications of the exuberant abundance and untrammelled freeness of this grace. Let this Apostle himself tell us of *his own* case, as an instance in point; a better illustrative example of the part of our subject now before us we could not have:—"I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."*

* 1 Tim. i. 12—16.

The import, then, of the question—"What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction:" appears to be:—"Suppose these, or such as these, to have been the ends of God in His dealings with sinners,—who can say anything against it? Is it not right, that both in the exercise of *saving* and of *punitive* power, He should *so* save and *so* punish, as most effectually to show forth the glory of His name, and secure His moral government from all injurious reflection. Who is there, in that case, that will presume to say unto Him—What doest thou?" "Is there unrighteousness with God" in making his righteousness as well as his mercy apparent?—in magnifying the one as well as the other?—"God forbid!"

There is a tendency among some at present,—and it is far from new,—to dwell too exclusively on the divine *LOVE*, and to make too little of the other equally essential attributes of the divine character. All is *love*—*love*—*love*. *Love* on God's part; *peace* on the sinner's part, the all-in-all of the Gospel. It is a system of universal blandishment. I cannot at present enlarge on this; but may take another opportunity of doing so. What I wish to notice specially *now* is—the extraordinary position, that because the atonement is universal, and the gift of Christ is the highest expression of love, therefore divine love must be love without distinctions,—*love*, in every view of it as well as in the making of the atonement, embracing all alike, and conferring favours on all alike. As if, because the atonement has been made for all, in order to there being a consistent ground on which all might be invited to pardon, therefore there can be, and must be no distinctions in the *saving application* of the atonement. God says—"This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." Now, does He do *this* alike to all? God says—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Does He do *this* alike to all?—It is not said, observe, "I will

put my laws in their inward parts, and on their minds will I write them," *if they do not resist me.* I will use every means; and it shall be done, *if they only yield to its being done:*—It is not said, "A new heart will I give you," if you do not resist me:—"I will put my Spirit within you," if you will yield to the means I use, and allow him to enter. The terms are explicit and direct. And these are promises which could be verified by no other than a *special* divine influence. They are not made to depend on the sinner's will; the sinner's will being the very thing which they engage, on the part of God, to persuade and to change. But God does *not* do these things *to all*;—and is there no *special* favour conferred on those in whose experience he fulfils them?

And yet everything like the manifestation of any special or distinguishing favour,—any loving of one more than another,—any bestowment of influence on one that is not bestowed upon another,—is denounced as *partiality*, and as charging God with being a *respecter of persons*. And we are assured that it is *especially* in the exercise of His *love* that all respect of persons is disclaimed by Him, and that He deals with all alike. Now, we challenge the production of a single passage of Scripture, in which the phrase *respect of persons*, or the designation *a respecter of persons*, is used with any reference whatever to the exercise of the *love or mercy of God to men* as sinners, guilty and condemned. The phrases, when used of *men*, are always used with reference to the principles of *equity*, of fairness, of judicial rectitude; and in every instance in which they are used of God, the same is their meaning. I might show this by an analysis of all the passages where they occur. For the present I must satisfy myself with affirming it, and referring you to parallel passages or a concordance, that you may test the affirmation. We *must* maintain the perfect freedom of the love and mercy of God in their exercise to sinners. Where all have sinned, there is, there can be, no obligation. From the manner in which some speak, one would conclude they thought there was. They speak as if God were indeed bound to love all alike, when in reality He is not bound to love any at all,—

His love having by all been forfeited, and the sentence of His righteousness incurred. It would seem as if all the concern of the divine Being were about the glory of His *love*. But the Bible, in every page of it, teaches us another lesson. The passage we have been considering teaches us another lesson. When it puts the question—"What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,"—we have seen what the question implies. And to what it implies in regard to the second class of persons mentioned, and the second branch of the alternative, we hear of no objection. No, no. Yet, is there anything wrong, if God *is* to execute vengeance, in his "wrath and power," on the finally impenitent,—in His so arranging everything in His providence, as to make *this* too glorifying to Himself?—that He should fully secure His own glory in the perdition of the lost, as well as in the salvation of the saved?—We may not like it so well. But the question is not, *whether we like it*, but *whether God says it*. Like it! Poor creatures! *Our* liking it might be one of the most clear and damning proofs of its falsehood. God *must* be glorified; glorified in salvation,—glorified in perdition:—and it is right that He should, in every way consistent with eternal rectitude, consult His own glory; and *that*, not for His own sake,—and not merely because in itself it is the highest of all possible ends,—but also for the sake of the moral universe. His righteousness and mercy were glorified together on the Cross; and they shall be glorified together in all the decisions of the Throne.

I close with one reflection—While it is right for us to look at both sides of the alternative here brought before us,—and while it becomes us, with lowly awe, to bow to the righteousness of God in his dealings with "the vessels of wrath;"—it is especially delightful for us to contemplate Him "preparing for glory the vessels of mercy." His time of preparing them is very various. He can fit them in a moment;—while sometimes the preparation, by His word, His ordinances, His discipline, His Spirit, extends through many a

year. He spares them sometimes as instruments for His use in preparing *other* “vessels of mercy” for the same glory with themselves. And then, when He takes either His ministering servants or His believing people to the inheritance of the glory for which He has prepared them, and which He has prepared for them,—how pleasing, how delightful, our emotions, in looking after them. When servants of His, especially, who during a long ministry, have been faithful and zealous, and prayerful, and successful in their work,—whom He has fully prepared for glory themselves, and whom He has made the honoured instruments, directly and indirectly, of preparing others, are, in His providence, removed,—we mourn indeed, but we at the same time rejoice. He has taken these vessels, where they will be filled to overflowing, with love and joy; and where He may put them still to uses glorifying to himself and honourable to them; more glorifying to Him, and more honourable to themselves, than any use He could make of them in their imperfect state below!

LECTURE XLIII.

ROMANS IX. 25—33.

“As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God. Esaias also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved: for he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha. What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

THERE were two articles of apostolic practice and intimation which were peculiarly odious to the unbelieving Jews. These were closely connected, the one leading to the other. They were, the calling of the Gentiles, and their own national rejection as the people and church of God.

In regard to the latter of these, the Apostle had vindicated the divine faithfulness in it by showing a designed limitation in the extent of the promise; for every promise of God, “with whom it is impossible to lie,” must have an accomplishment in the full amount of its original meaning.*

* Vers. 6—8.

He had then affirmed the sovereignty of God in the exercise of mercy to sinners, all alike unworthy, and had illustrated and established it by instances. His principles of argument on this subject are equally applicable to Jews and Gentiles—to all of them individually. And that the Apostle speaks of them individually, not nationally, the twenty-fourth verse, as well as the whole passage, evidently shows:—"Even *us*, whom he hath chosen, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."

The Apostle proceeds (vers. 25—29.) to show that these various particulars—the salvation of a chosen remnant both of Gentiles and Jews; and the casting-off of the great body of the Jewish people, had been the subjects of prediction. And then (vers. 30—33.) he points out the precise amount and reason of the difference between the called of the Gentiles and the outcast of Israel.

In regard to the former of these two subjects, he quotes two passages from the prophecies of Hosea.* The first of these has more immediate reference to the calling of the Gentiles; and the second to the restoration of Israel in "the latter days,"—of which the calling of so many of them in the beginning of the Gospel was a prelude and pledge. The following note by Bishop Horsley on the two passages appears to me to give their true sense, and to show justly the use made of them by the Apostle in this connexion. Speaking of the tenth and eleventh verses of the first chapter, with the preceding context, he says—"By the exposition which I have given of the several parts of this passage, I hope I have shown that it is an express prophecy of the final conversion and restoration of the Jews, not without manifest allusion to the call of the Gentiles. The word *Jezrael*, though applied in this passage to the devout part of the natural Israel, by its etymology is capable of a larger meaning, comprehending all, of every race and nation, who, by the preaching of the Gospel, are made members of Christ, and children of God. All these are a seed of God (the

* Chap. ii. 23 and chap. i. 10.

meaning of *Jezrael*) begotten of him by the Spirit to a holy life and to the inheritance of immortality. The words Ammi and Ruhamah, and their opposites, Lo-ammi and Lo-Ruhamah, are capable of the same extension, the two former to comprehend the converted, the two latter the unconverted Gentiles. In this extent they seem to be used in chap. ii. 23, which I take to be a prophecy of the call of the Gentiles with manifest allusion to the restoration of the Jews. Accordingly we find these prophecies of Hosea cited by Paul to prove not the call of the Gentiles solely, but the indiscriminate call to salvation both of Gentiles and Jews. He affirms that 'God hath called us (i. e. us Christians), vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory, not of the Jews only, but moreover of the Gentiles too.' And it is proof of this proposition that he cites the prophecies of Hosea. And the manner of his citation is this. First, he alleges two clauses, but in an inverted order, from the twenty-third verse of chapter second, which seem to relate more immediately to the calling of the Gentiles — 'I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved;' and to these he subjoins, as relating solely to the restoration of the Jews, that part of this prophecy of the first chapter, which affirms, 'that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there they should be called the children of the living God.' From these detached passages, thus connected, he derives the confirmation of his proposition concerning the joint call of Jew and Gentile to the mercy of the Gospel."

The next predictions, quoted from Isaiah,* have reference to the distinction already stated and proved as subsisting amongst the Israelites themselves—the distinction, namely, between Israel after the flesh, and Israel after the Spirit. These, as well as Hos. ii. 23, are quoted, substantially, but not precisely, according to the Greek of the Septuagint. And I may here remark respecting the Apostolic quotations from the Old Testament in general, that they are sometimes according to the precise terms of the

* Chap. x. 22, 23; i. 9.

Hebrew, sometimes as in the Septuagint, and sometimes not according to the very words of either. From which it follows that the *sense* of scripture is scripture, and not the words or syllables. It is obvious that the same sentiment may often be expressed correctly under different forms of speech. Let it not, however, be inferred from this, that the sentiments only were originally inspired, the language being left to the choice of the writer. This would be rather a hazardous inference; for if the sentiment alone were communicated, and the choice of terms left to the prophet, how could we be infallibly certain that the sentiment has been correctly and unequivocally conveyed? Besides, although it would be false to say that no thought can subsist in the mind unless clothed in words, because in that case there could be no thought in any mind previously to the learning and familiar use of language;—yet when language *has* become familiar to us, we are quite accustomed to think in words, and can hardly imagine how sentiments could be conveyed to the mind otherwise than in words. And further still; the prophets frequently delivered predictions of the precise meaning of which they themselves had no distinct intelligence, and sometimes hardly any understanding at all. Now then, in such cases especially, could they be supposed to convey with precision and certainty the mind of God? What security could we possibly have for this?* Though the Apostles sometimes quote as in the Septuagint, they are not by so doing to be considered by any means as giving their sanction to the whole of that version, which in many instances is very faulty, and at times unintelligible. We must recollect that the Apostles themselves were inspired men—so that, when they quoted from the Septuagint, we are sure that in the Septuagint, in that instance, the expression is in harmony with the mind of the Spirit; and in the same way when they quote in terms partly of their own, we are sure that they are giving the sense, although in different terms from those of the prophet whom they cite. As to the first of

* On this subject compare Introductory Lectures, pp. 2—5. also Syst. Theol., vol. iii. pp. 7—10.

the instances before us, the meaning is obviously much the same, though the expression varies. “The consumption overflowing” the land “in righteousness,” would leave but “a remnant.”*

“A remnant shall be saved”—signifies evidently a remnant *only* shall be saved. The very reading of the verse sufficiently shows this. The emphasis is not so much on the *salvation* of the remnant, as on its being *but* a remnant that is saved; this implying the destruction of the rest. “He will finish *the work*”—more properly *the account*.† “And in finishing he will *cut it short*,” i. e. leaving a small amount only: like a man striking out of a large account all but a few small items. “A short account will the Lord make *upon the earth*,”—more properly *upon the land*. He will not allow the account to stand or to run on any longer; but will, in a strict and summary way, bring it to a settlement. He will call his debtors to account, and take sudden and fearful vengeance on them for their ungrateful abuse of his long-suffering lenity and forbearance. But while in judgment He will execute extensive vengeance, He will in mercy spare a small remnant. This corresponds with the “consumption” in the language of the prophet.‡ The connexion leads us to consider the words as primarily referring to the preservation of “a remnant” from the wasting ravages of the king of Assyria. But we have evidence before us, in the application of them by the Apostle, that they had a reference to a more extensive and remarkable fulfilment in the calling of “a remnant” in Gospel times into the participation of the blessings of Messiah’s kingdom, and the destruction by awful judgments of the unbelieving nation.§

In the next quotation the correspondence of meaning is also sufficiently apparent. “*A seed*” is, in our version from

* See chap. xxviii. 16—24.

† The Greek is *λόγον*, and is rendered account in such passages as Matt. xviii. 23; Rom. xiv. 12. It never has the sense of “*work*.”—ED.

‡ Verse 23.

§ See Zech. xiii. 8, which refers to the same events and the same divine dealings.

the Hebrew, "*a very small remnant.*" By this citation, then, after having intimated that God was about to "cut short the account in righteousness," Paul reminds them of the true reason of their preservation even hitherto. It was on account of this "*seed*"—this "*small remnant.*" It was for their sakes. *They* had been the preserving salt. On their account, wrath had been stayed. As "*ten righteous*" would have saved the cities of the plain from the impending catastrophe of divine retribution; so had the "*seven thousand men* that had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal," warded off for many a day the threatened vengeance. Had it not been for the "*remnant*" that had always been amongst them, and for the prospect of the number of converts to be added after the coming of the Messiah, the desolating storm of divine visitation would long before have come "*to the uttermost*" upon the "*disobedient and gainsaying people.*" This was intended and calculated to impress their minds with the alarming conviction that the unrighteous and ungodly amongst them never had been, and were not now, the *true* people of God; and that, although God had delayed the execution of His wrath, yet now, when they had "*filled up the measure of their iniquities*" by their treatment of His Son and the messengers of His mercy, He was about to separate and spare and bless the chosen remnant, while He made the unbelieving and impenitent, the large majority of the favoured nation, feel "*the lighting down of His arm.*" At the same time the very preservation of this remnant would constitute a wide and material difference between the case of the devoted Jews and that of Sodom and Gomorrah. The destruction of the cities of the plain was total undistinguishing ruin. Here, it is "*measuring by two lines*" indeed "*to destroy,*" but still "*by one*" also to "*keep alive.*" The same Lord of Hosts, who brings the judgments in righteousness, spares the remnant in mercy. The threatenings and the partial judgments of Jehovah in former times, thus referred to, were calculated to lessen the surprise of his unbelieving countrymen at what the Apostle was now, in the name of God, intimating and denouncing. The distinc-

tion made by him between God's chosen remnant and the body of the nation, they might see, was not at all a new one, but one recognised and distinctly and repeatedly mentioned in the language of their own Prophets.

The Apostle then goes on to show the ground of the difference between the Gentiles whom God had received, and the Israelites whom he had rejected and doomed to just vengeance:—Verses 30—33. “What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

The general meaning is not difficult. “What shall we say then?” On what footing is it that the Gentiles are received and Israel rejected? The Gentiles “followed not after righteousness.” They were ignorant of God and of the nature and extent of the righteousness which God requires. They had remnants of corrupted tradition, and of the law of God, written in their consciences. But of such righteousness as the spiritual precepts of a holy God require they were fearfully regardless. Their picture is drawn in vivid outline in a preceding part of the Epistle.* Yet these Gentiles—such of them as had heard and believed the Gospel,—had “attained to righteousness,” even to a righteousness sufficient for their justification before God and their final acceptance in His sight. What was this righteousness? and how was it attained? The answer is in these words—“even the righteousness which is of faith;”—that is, the righteousness of Christ imputed to them that believe†.

But on the contrary, while the believing Gentiles thus

* Chap. i. 28—32.

† See ch. i. 16, 17; iii. 21, 22; iv. 6—11, 23—25; Phil. iii. 7—11, &c.

attained to justification by faith—"Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath *not attained to the law of righteousness.*" "The law of righteousness" is the law which prescribes the obedience which God righteously requires, and which, if perfectly obeyed, in principle and practice, would constitute our righteousness, in which we might stand accepted before the holy Lawgiver. To "*follow after this law*" is to seek salvation by obedience to it; in order to which the obedience must be perfect, in principle and practice, in thought, and word, and deed.

Here is the plain and simple cause of their "not attaining to the law of righteousness." It left them far behind. They fell necessarily and in every point short. They could not reach a righteousness conformable to its pure and spiritual perfection,—adequate at all to its demands.

"Wherefore?" For a very simple and satisfactory reason. They sought it in a wrong way. They did not seek it in God's way—the only way in which it could possibly be attained—namely by faith in Jesus, by whom an everlasting righteousness hath been brought in for the justification of the ungodly.* They sought righteousness not by believing in the revealed justifying righteousness of the Mediator, but by their own personal performances; foolishly, and falsely, and ignorantly presuming that they could recommend themselves and make out a valid title to life. The attempt was vain; and the presumption and impiety of it were equal to its vanity. The Law had already condemned them; as it does every one who has transgressed it—thundering forth its irrepealable denunciation—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Then follows the reason of their unbelief: "*for† they*

* 2 Cor. v. 21; Acts xiii. 38, 39.

† There is, however, a great weight of manuscript authority against the reading of *γαρ*. Alford, with others, expunges it; and reads verse 32 "Wherefore? Because (pursuing it) not by faith but as by the works of the law, they stumbled at the stone of stumbling." He remarks, perhaps justly, "It" (*γαρ*) "confuses the sense, making it appear as if the stumbling was the cause of, or, at all events, coincident with, their pursuing "not by faith but as by the works of the

stumbled at that stumbling-stone." The stumbling-stone is JESUS. Through prejudice and pride; through corrupt hatred of the purity of his doctrine, the spirituality of his requirements, and the heavenliness of his kingdom; through the virulence and indignation engendered by the frustration of carnal and worldly expectations and hopes; and offence at the outward meanness of his parentage, his birth, his station—he was to them, and all about him, "as a root out of a dry ground. He had no form or comeliness; no beauty that they should desire him. They hid their faces from him: he was despised, and they esteemed him not."* Thus they "*stumbled at that stumbling-stone.*"

"As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Two passages are here referred to, part of each being quoted.† The stone was laid in Sion, for a "sure foundation." Such was the primary and direct design of Jehovah in laying it; and so it proved to every one who trusted in it. But it would at the same time, according to the prophet, prove "a stumbling-stone and a rock of offence" to the great majority of the house of Israel. The double effect is referred to by Simeon in his address to the mother of our Lord—"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."‡ The fearful consequences of the refusal of this stone are thus set forth by Christ himself to the Jews of his day—"Did ye never read in the scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the

law" whereas it was this mistaken method of pursuing which caused them to stumble against the stone of stumbling."—ED.

* Isa. liii. 2, 3.

† Isa. xxviii. 16; with chap. viii. 14, 15.

‡ Luke ii. 34, 35.

fruits thereof. And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.”* And the same danger and fatal consequences are generalized by Peter and represented as common to Jews and Gentiles, even to all to whom the Gospel comes: “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed.”† The Apostle quotes the words—“Whosoever believeth in HIM shall not be ashamed,” by way of *encouragement*. He had been delivering truths of which his unbelieving countrymen might be tempted to say, “These are hard sayings, who can bear them?” Hence while he warns he gives hope. Though the prophet had thus foretold the stumbling and consequent “casting off” and perdition, of all in Israel who were proud of heart, and unwilling to submit to the humbling terms and spiritual requisitions of the Gospel, he also foretold that the stone at which they stumbled should be a sure foundation on which all should be welcome to build, and on which all who did build should be secure for eternity—should never be ashamed. And to all the same encouragement is still held out, along with the same warnings of danger. It is still true, that they who “stumble at this stumbling-stone” can never “attain to righteousness;” and that without a righteousness adequate to their justification, they must perish. But it still remains on record, and is still announced equally to all, in the proclamation of the Gospel—“Whosoever believeth on HIM shall not be ashamed:” shall not “make haste,” to flee from the gathering storm, of which “the hail is to sweep away the refuges of lies, and the waters to overflow the hiding-place,” but shall stand firm and undismayed, secure upon “the rock

* Matt. xxi. 42—44.

† 1 Pet. ii. 6—8.

of ages,"—on that foundation which the power and grace of Jehovah has laid, and which no other power can unsettle; which the whirlwind and the flood and the quaking earth,—all the turmoil of the warring elements, cannot shake. The storm that sweeps away other refuges, is a storm of Jehovah's indignation. But His own foundation "standeth sure." Blessed are they that shall be found trusting in it!

We have here an exemplification of our Lord's saying—“ Many that are first shall be last; and the last first.” The Gentiles attain to righteousness, while the privileged and highly favoured descendants of Abraham fail of finding it. Trusting in their privileges themselves instead of duly improving them; mistaking altogether the design of the Law, and overlooking or misinterpreting the many intimations of the divine method of acceptance for sinners as “ witnessed by the law and the prophets,” they refused the grace which these intimations contained, and which was subsequently made known by Christ and his Apostles, in all its clearness and fulness and freedom; and persisted in the vain endeavour to make out an obedience for themselves that might obtain them acceptance with God: and the Gentiles, whom they despised as heaven's outcasts, obtain the blessing which they by their pride and blindness wilfully forfeit.

And still, brethren, in the spirit of them, may our Saviour's words be fulfilled. Multitudes there are, who, in possession not of the Jewish scriptures only but of the full and plain discoveries of apostolic inspiration, persist in the very same course with the unbelievers of Israel. They “ seek righteousness as it were by the works of the law.” In some form or other, in some degree or other, with some modification or other, they still fancy they must and may do something to justify themselves. They stumble at the stumbling stone of unmixed unqualified grace:—and, low as are their conceptions of what the law of God requires, or rather of what the Gospel as, in their idea, a kind of reduction and modification of the Law requires, they flatter themselves in their own eyes with possible success. Thus we may witness a repetition of the same scene as is described by the Apostle. Gentiles in the

islands of the Pacific, or the wild inhabitants of Caffir-land, may receive in their simplicity, the tidings of mercy, and find justification with God by the acceptance in faith of the redeemer's righteousness, while the privileged population of Britain may be, many of them, trusting in their privileges and their Christian descent and name; and many of them too, mistaking the nature of the Gospel, may still be seeking righteousness in vain by doings of their own. Thus, in unnumbered cases besides that in regard to which the solemn declaration was first made—"THE LAST MAY BE FIRST, AND THE FIRST LAST."

LECTURE XLIV

ROMANS X. 1—4.

“ Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

THE Apostle had expressed, in very strong terms, his solicitude and grief for the state and prospects of his unbelieving countrymen.* He had declared, also, their rejection, and the ground of it.† Faithfulness required this of him; and so did the very love to their souls from which arose his sorrow for their unbelief. Aware of the offensiveness of such a statement, and anxious that his motive in making them might not be mistaken, he here repeats his assurances of fervent interest in their welfare:—“ Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” The desire and prayer were the result of his sorrow; and his sorrow was the dictate of love. This love partook of general benevolence, of patriotic attachment, and of the affection of kindred. He wished and sought their happiness as fellow-men. He wished and sought it more especially as Israelites, and “ kinsmen according to the flesh.” The faith of the Gospel, while it inspires general benevolence, and prompts him who is under its influence to seek the welfare of *all*; does not, by any means, obliterate

* Chap. ix. 1—3.

† Verses 30—33.

the peculiarities of affection which arise from natural relationship. These still remain, proportioned to the degrees of consanguinity, although associated, and elevated, and hallowed by higher and holier principles. Deeply as our hearts must be affected by the thought of the perdition of *any*, we cannot but shrink with a more sensitive horror from the contemplation of that of one who is “bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.” And, in proportion to the horror with which we think of the perdition of such, will be the intensity of delighted interest with which we see reason to hope for their salvation; the earnestness of our desires for its attainment, and the fervency of our intercessions for them at the divine throne.—The salvation of *Israel* was the object of Paul’s desire. It lay near to his heart; and nothing would have filled it with a livelier joy. There can be no question that it is of the *unbelieving part* of Israel he here speaks. How, then, it may be asked, does he here pray for their salvation, when, in the preceding and subsequent chapters, he so distinctly intimates their rejection by Jehovah? Does not such intimation render prayer vain? To this we reply—

The rejection of Israel is stated by the Apostle as the effect and consequence of their unbelief and sin. It is thus a *conditional* rejection. There was still room left, therefore, for “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul had no certain intimation that all who were now unbelievers were to persist in their unbelief. He knew not which should and which should not. And his prayer for their salvation is a prayer for their conversion to God; for their “turning from their evil way and from the evil of their doings;” for their repenting and believing the Gospel. He could not make any distinction. They all needed salvation; and he seeks it for them all alike. It is a petition that the veil might be taken from the eyes of their minds, that they might believe and be saved. He had no idea of their being saved in any other way. To seek salvation for any in any other way is impious. It is asking what is not “according to God’s will,” and he can never hear the prayer.

Asking “according to God’s will” relates to both the *subject* and *ground* of petition. But God’s *will* does not in this language of John signify His special purposes, but rather the disposition of His character, His general will—as a moral Governor, infinitely holy and infinitely good, having “no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” In this view, we have nothing to do with the special purposes of God. Who is there for whose salvation it is not “according to His will” that we should ask?

Prayer, moreover, is not inconsistent with the purposes of God. If it were, it must be *universally* so, and universally vain and fruitless. God has enjoined prayer for ourselves and others: and when we neglect it, we have not used the prescribed means, and have no right to expect the blessing any more than when we fail to employ means of other kinds. Even the intimated purposes of God are not always irreversible. Jonah proclaimed—“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed;” and yet Nineveh was at the time spared. It was saved by humiliation and repentance; which God foresaw, and which the very proclamation was the intended means of producing. So, also, as to the intimation of Hezekiah’s dying. The declaration by the Prophet to him was—“Thou shalt die, and not live;” yet he was “healed,” and to his “days” were “added fifteen years.”* Prayer was the ordained means of bringing about this addition. Who will say that either the end or the means was unanticipated?—So Paul had nothing to do with divine decrees. He saw his countrymen in danger of perishing by their unbelief. This was enough to warrant his earnest intercession for them. He knew not how far this intercession might prove availing:—and hereafter† we shall find the same principle guiding his *efforts* for them, which here directs his prayers.‡

The Apostle, full of tender compassion, equally faithful

* 2 Kings xx. 1—6.

† Chap. xi.

‡ There is little doubt, at the same time, that, while Paul was desirous of by all means saving some by his exertions and his prayers, he anticipated what he afterwards enlarges upon, the purpose of God relative to the future collective restoration and salvation of Israel.

and affectionate, and faithful *because* affectionate, felt for them as deluded and self-deceived, through wilful and criminal ignorance. Even the good qualities, to which he bears his testimony, were qualities which were more than neutralized by the motives and principles with which they were associated:—verses 2. “For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” He gives his attestation to their “zeal,” as one who had every opportunity of knowing their temper of mind. He might be said, indeed, to have known it from experience, having for a time been one of themselves, entering fully and warmly into their views, and pursuing the same course.* He had been a notable example of the very zeal which he describes. —It was “*a zeal of God*,” that is, it was both in profession and in practice a passionate ardour for His glory, according to the view which they took of it. This zeal was manifested in their pertinacious adherence to the Law, as being God’s institution; in violent opposition to the Gospel, as being, in their estimation, at variance with the Law, overturning it, and “making it void;”—and as, by its external meanness, unworthy of Him who had discovered himself with such majesty and splendour under the ancient economy; and as being, moreover, inconsistent with the promises of Jehovah to Israel, according to their false apprehensions of their import.—On such grounds, they were all vehemence and rage against the Cross, and thought that in seeking the subversion of the rising interests of Christianity, they were “doing God service.” But it was zeal “not according to knowledge.” It was founded on principles which involved ignorance of the true character of God; of the person and character and kingdom of the Christ, the promised Messiah; and of the true nature and design both of the Law and of the Gospel; and ignorance, consequently, of themselves, of their own true character and state before God, and prospects for eternity.†

* Comp. John xvi. 1, 2; Acts xxii. 3, 4; xxvi. 9—11; Gal. i. 13, 14; Phil. iii. 5, 6.

† Comp. John xvi. 3; xv. 21; 1 Tim. i. 13.

There is one subject particularly specified, on which their sentiments and conduct made their ignorance manifest; and it is here adduced in evidence of the charge brought against them—of the illegitimate character of their zeal:—verse 3. “For they, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

“*The righteousness of God*” evidently means in this connexion the righteousness provided by God for the justification of sinners.* “*Submitting*” to this righteousness is renouncing all self-dependence and self-justifying pretensions, and with humble consciousness and acknowledgment of our own entire unworthiness in God’s sight, placing our reliance simply and solely on the work of Jesus Christ, which is “*the righteousness of God*,” or that on account of which He justifies sinners. The expression implies that it is humbling and mortifying to the pride of the human heart. Men naturally like to have something of their own on which they may, in whole or in part, rely. But all such reliance is inconsistent with the submission of the soul to God’s method of “*justifying the ungodly*.”

Instead of this—they “*went about to establish their own righteousness*.† This they did by a scrupulous observance of the outward ceremonial of the Law, punctiliously performing its requisitions and shunning its prohibited indulgences; and at the same time by such a morality as satisfied their consciences, when by the glosses of their “doctors” its requirements had been mitigated, its spirituality and comprehensiveness impaired, and its general character accommodated to the likings of their corrupt natures. They knew nothing of the *spirituality* of the Law.‡ They trusted in their abstinence from the grosser vices.§ Nay, even while indulging their lusts they gloried in their security on account of their descent from Abraham and their peculiar privileges; and for their *failings* they looked to the expiations and purifications

* Chap. ix. 30; i. 17; iii. 21, 22.

† Rom. vii. 7—9.

‡ See chap. ix. 31, 32.

§ Luke xviii. 11, 12,

enjoined by the Law for their forgiveness, setting their performances over against their failures.

And is not their principle and conduct that of many in our own day? They are followed in every part of their system:—in dependence on external observances; in the reduction and accommodation of the Law; and in offerings to make amends for failures. These offerings are not now, it is true, the same in kind. They consist not in the shedding of the blood of victims at the altar. But the spirit of all penances, and mortifications, and pilgrimages, and alms when given to purchase peace with heaven, is the very same. It is amazing indeed, how far men will go in what is merely external;—what they will do, what they will give, what they will submit to, for forgiveness and salvation, if the conscience and the heart are left free. And it is not less wonderful, considering the Being with whom they have to do, and the amount of the blessings to be secured, *with how very little* men can satisfy themselves as their “righteousness”—the ground of their hope before God.

The *cause* of the conduct is assigned:—“they being ignorant of God’s righteousness.” It seems natural that “*God’s righteousness*” should have here the same meaning as “the righteousness of God” in the end of the verse. It is accordingly considered by some as meaning—“they being ignorant of God’s *method of justification*, and going about to establish their own method of justification, have not submitted themselves unto God’s method of justification.”

They were *ignorant** of God’s justifying righteousness. They knew not that the righteousness “set before them in the Gospel” for the justification of sinners, *was of God*. They knew not that Mediator by whom, in his finished work, “all righteousness was fulfilled” in the room and on the behalf of sinners. Wilfully and proudly ignorant of this, they refused to ‘submit to this righteousness’ for their acceptance and salvation, and sought to ‘establish one of their own’—to make

* “Being ignorant,” or (*ἀγνοοῦντες*), *not perceiving*, or *discerning*. They did not apprehend it.—ED.

out a ground of acceptance for themselves. Even at the hazard, however, of its being deemed unnatural to take the same phrase in two senses in the same verse, I am strongly inclined to think that the “righteousness of God” in the first of its occurrences in verse third signifies *the righteousness of the divine character*. We are not without examples of the same double sense of the phrase in the same connexion.* The nature of language renders this at times unavoidable.

“The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.” Doubtless the Jews were well aware that righteousness was an attribute of the divine character. But this does not amount to *knowing* the righteousness of God. To know it, is to know it in its true nature and extent. They knew, in a general way, that *the law* was righteous: but they were really ignorant of the spirituality and extent of its requirements. From ignorance and inconsideration of the righteousness of the divine character arises a corresponding ignorance of the amount of the righteousness which He requires unto justification. We may lay it down as a maxim that nothing but ignorance of the purity and righteousness of God can ever induce any sinner to “go about to establish a righteousness of his own,” and to refuse to submit to the vicarious righteousness provided by the Gospel. This is the only justifying righteousness for the sinner that is in harmony with the character of ‘Him with whom he has to do.’ Sound views of the righteousness of this character will instantly dissipate all the sinner’s vain imaginations, and overturn to its very basis every system of self-justification. Who that has any right knowledge of God can for a moment cherish the hope of making out such a righteousness as God can accept? Let a man talk in the most elevated terms of the perfection and infinitude of the righteousness of God,—if he at all imagines that God can accept any obedience of his, any righteousness that is not perfect, as the ground of justification, he shows himself, by this very imagination, to be really ignorant as yet of the very attribute which in words he extols. And all the “zeal for

* See chap. iii. 5, 21—26.

God,"—however lofty in its pretensions, however indignant in its denunciation of what it deems unworthy of Him, is, by the very refusal of submission to grace, and of justification through the righteousness revealed in the Gospel, proved to be ignorant zeal, inconsistent with any right views of the divine purity and justice, though affecting the greatest solicitude for what it falsely regards as God's honour. The self-righteous principle is the principle of regard to one's own glory, not to the glory of God; though the one generally covers itself under the other; the wrong under the right; and the glory of God is made to minister, with all possible plausibility, to their own pride.

The Apostle does not mean to excuse them. Their ignorance, in either sense of the words, was "without excuse." It was the effect of the hardness of their hearts. It arose from the same principle with that to which the ignorance of the Gentiles is imputed.*

In seeking to be "justified by the law," they perverted it to a use which, as given to them, it was never intended to serve,—and which *to sinners* it never, in the nature of the thing, *can* serve. A law never can justify the transgressor of it. The law of God can never justify a sinner: and therefore it can justify no man living, *all* having sinned. Are we, then, left hopeless, destitute of any means of justification before God,—shut up in despair? No, blessed be His name!—verse 4. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." This verse is capable of two interpretations, both equally to the Apostle's purpose.

1. The commandment, or law, was "ordained to life." Such was its original "*end*." Perfect obedience to it would give life; for this was originally the condition on which life was held. But *this* end it cannot answer as to any who have transgressed it:—not from any fault in the Law, which remains the same, and in itself perfectly competent to its original design, but from the fault of the depraved nature of

* Rom. i. 28.

its fallen subject. Is there, then, any other way in which the end which the Law cannot now answer may be effected? This verse replies in the affirmative—"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," the *end* that is which the Law necessarily fails of effecting for the sinner, the sinner obtains by believing in Christ and becoming a partaker of the righteousness which Christ hath wrought out,—a righteousness which comes up to the demands of the Law in their full extent.

2. Christ was "*the end*," the scope—the leading object, purpose or design* of the Law, *as given to Israel*. The moral law, we have seen, was originally the condition of life. But as soon as man fell, this state of things ceased: there ceased the very possibility of life from the Law. When, therefore, it is at any time afterwards, repeated to men, who are *sinners*, it cannot be that they may be induced to *seek life* by it. That were a perfect contradiction. In this view of the Law, therefore, it could not, when given by Moses, be intended for any such end. The declaration of it, in its holy spirituality of requirement, was calculated only to "work wrath,"—to "make the offence abound,"—and thus, by engendering despair, to "shut up to the faith afterwards to be revealed." And the ceremonial law had obviously the same *end*. It pointed to Christ. He was its leading scope.† When in any way, then, they rested in the Law for life, they misunderstood and perverted it. It was never designed, from the time that man fell, to give life,—but only to direct and shut up to Him who is "**THE LIFE**"—even Jesus. In Him righteousness is to be found:—and this is God's righteousness—the righteousness provided by Him for the justification of the ungodly.

The passage suggests the following practical reflections:—

1. Let us imitate the example of the Apostle in earnest

* For this sense of $\tau\epsilon\lambda\sigma\varsigma$ compare 1 Tim. i. 5. Many take it *historically*—termination; but this does not seem to suit the context; and we must consider the Apostle as speaking only of the *ceremonial* law.—ED.

† See Gal. iii. 21—26.

prayer for the salvation of others, especially for the salvation of *our kindred*. If we feel towards them due affection we cannot but desire *their good*; and if we feel as Christians, we cannot but regard this as their *greatest* good. The Apostle's language implies, not that he was indifferent about every other description of good; but that, comparatively, everything besides was as nothing. He speaks as if he had no other desire, and no other prayer for Israel but *this one*—"that they might be saved." What then is your chief petition for those you love? Do you "seek *first*, for them the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Can you enter fully into the language of Paul—"My heart's desire"—that which most heavily burdens my spirit, and excites the intensest longings,—and my "prayer to God for my kindred"—that for which I plead most fervently and importunately, making it "first and last and midst in my intercession for them" is—"that they may be saved?" O what would it be to obtain for them everything else, were the blessings of God's salvation wanting! Their portion would be poor even for time, and their eternal existence would be unprovided for. Do you seek great things, then, for your children and for your other relations, as to this world? Is the chief part of your prayers for them occupied with their health, their comfort, their temporal prosperity, and their prospects for life? Are those the subjects of your chief anxiety? You do not feel as Christians, if they are. To him who has learned the preciousness of the immortal soul, and of those blessings which constitute its happiness for eternity, there will be nothing that loads the spirit with such solicitude or draws forth more earnest pleadings at "the throne of grace," than the spiritual condition and the everlasting prospects of the objects of his love. It is no doubt natural for us to think as well as we can of the objects of our affection. Yet often have I marvelled at the opposite effect which love has in some minds in regard to physical and in regard to moral evil as existing in the objects of it. They are led to magnify the former and to mitigate the latter. The fears of affection make them tremble at every the

slightest symptom of bodily distemper in those whom they love; while the fondness of the same affection makes them take a light and apologetic view of their faults and vices. This is not as it ought to be. Love, in a Christian's bosom, should be most alive to the fear of moral and spiritual defects and evils:—*these* are the evils which it should most dread to find in its objects, and from which it should be most solicitous to preserve and to deliver them. Every symptom of such evils should excite the liveliest apprehension, and call forth the most guarded vigilance and the most earnest supplication. For remember, prayer by itself, when we have opportunity for more, is hypocrisy.

2. There may be a “zeal of God,” that is even consistent with the *perdition* of its subject. There is a species of charity that is pernicious and destructive. It is pleased with every kind of religion. *Sincerity* is everything in its estimate. Sincerity even in wrong seems to convert wrong into right. But this will not do. *Such* charity is only another name for *indifference*. A man may be religious in *his own* way, and not in *God's* way. He may be a virulent enemy to God's religion, while he seems very much in earnest about his own. But no self-devised and self-righteous scheme of man can answer the end of salvation. It can neither justify nor sanctify. All is vain but that which God himself has revealed; and all self-justifying attempts, so far from being admitted by Him as religious service, are in the very spirit of irreligion and ungodliness. The zeal in their support is an ungodly zeal; and all its efforts are in opposition to the divine will. The law of justification for sinners is “*the law of faith.*” Every sinner that seeks it otherwise is a rebel. The work of salvation is done. It was finished on the cross by the atoning Son of God. “He is our peace.” “**HE IS THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**”

LECTURE XLV.

ROMANS x. 5—11.

“ For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

In these verses the Apostle pursues the same train of thought and argument as in those which precede. The principle of the Law, as here expressed, is abundantly simple—“The man who doeth these things shall live by them.”* Perfect obe-

* Comp. Levit. xviii. 5.—Some understand Moses as here speaking of the *condition of life in Canaan*,—that is, of the terms on which the promised land was obtained and held (for on whatever terms it was subsequently held, it must have been originally obtained on the same) on the part of ancient Israel.—But it is a great mistake to suppose that Canaan ever was obtained or held on terms of *law*. The supposition is contrary to the express affirmations of this inspired Apostle, by whom the earthly inheritance, like the heavenly, is placed on an entirely different footing, and is thus rendered the more remarkably and closely typical. See Gal. iii. 18; Rom. iv. 13, 14. Language cannot be more explicit. The earthly inheritance is primarily meant. It was obtained on the ground of promise—free and gracious promise. It was subsequently held, as it had been obtained, by faith in the promise; and when obedience is spoken of as a condition of continued possession,

dience is the condition of justification in *every* law. A law that admits the violation of itself is no law. In whatever point obedience is not indispensable, in *that point* there is *no law*: for a precept that may be obeyed or disobeyed at the option of the subject, is not a precept at all. That men try to evade this principle in the case of the divine law is only a manifestation of the power of a self-deceiving heart in biassing and blinding the judgment.

With the principle of the Law—that righteousness can only be obtained by obedience to its precepts—to *all* its precepts—its precepts in spirit as well as in action,—the Apostle proceeds to contrast the principle of the Gospel. The *Gospel* is intended for those who have already disobeyed the Law. It *must* therefore use a different language from the Law. To speak of acceptance on the ground of obedience to those who have already *disobeyed* were incongruous indeed. There is no such inconsistency in God's word. Hence the Gospel, as addressed to sinners, holds forth a ground of acceptance, a way of justification, entirely and necessarily different. This ground the Apostle brings forward anew, with all simplicity, in the following verses. He does so in terms borrowed, with suitable alteration, from what Moses said to Israel respecting the Law:—verses 6—8. “But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart:

it is to be understood of the *obedience of faith*, and as being a condition in the same sense in which the New Testament represents it as a condition of the final inheritance of the promised blessings of the New Covenant; when it enjoins on believers that they “follow holiness,” and assures them that “without it no man shall see the Lord.”

It must, indeed, be obvious to every considerate reader, that the words of Moses here quoted *must* be understood by the Apostle as expressing *perfect obedience*; else they would evidently be nothing at all to his purpose. Yet it is not less obvious, that in *this* sense they never could express the condition on which Canaan was held; for on *such a* condition, Canaan never *could* be held,—no, not for an hour.

that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”*

There is no necessity whatever for considering the words of Moses, because the Apostle thus applies them, as having had a reference to the Gospel. The language employed by Moses to describe the plainness and simplicity of the Law, the Apostle accommodates to the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel:† and he does it, as we have said, with appropriate variations. Of the law given to Israel, Moses says it was not “*hidden*” from them, nor “*far off*.” It was clearly revealed; it was “*very nigh*.” It was not still “*in heaven*;” so that they should ask in vain who should ascend thither to search for it in the archives of the unseen world and bring down to them the mind of Deity; for Deity himself had already descended from heaven, and had, with His own voice, delivered His law to them out of the midst of the darkness and the fires of Sinai. It was not in the possession of some far distant people, some nation “*beyond the sea*,” to whom Jehovah had made it known, and from whom they were, by troublesome and tedious and expensive embassies, to receive it at

* Comp. with Deut. xxx. 11—14.

† This is the view generally taken from Chrysostom downwards. Alford has a different idea. He says:—“I believe the account of the relation will be best found by bearing in mind that the Apostle is speaking of Christ as *the end of the law* for righteousness to the believer. He takes, as a confirmation of this, a passage occurring in a prophetic part of Deuteronomy, where Moses is foretelling to the Jews the consequences of rejecting God’s law, and His mercy to them even when under chastisement, if they would return to Him. He there describes the law in nearly the words cited in this verse. Now the Apostle, regarding Christ as the end of the law, its great central aim and object, quotes these words not merely as suiting his purpose, but as bearing, where originally used, an *a fortiori* application to faith in Him who is the end of the law, and to the commandment to believe in Him, which is now *God’s commandment*. If spoken of *the law* as a manifestation of God in man’s heart and mouth, much more were they spoken of Him, who is *God manifest in the flesh*, the *end of the law and the prophets*. . . . It is, in this passage, Paul’s object not merely to describe the righteousness which is of faith in Christ, but to show it described already in the words of the law.” This view, if it does not at once command assent, may be worthy of consideration.—ED.

second hand. No: Jehovah had singled out themselves for the peculiar distinction. What other people had heard the voice of the Lord God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as they had? “He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel: he dealt not so with any other nation.” The peoples of distant lands might come to learn of them: *they* needed not to cross seas and traverse continents in search of the mind of God. It was before them—delivered to them with all distinctness, by God himself or by His accredited ambassador.*

In evidence of the sincerity of faith, there is here, as in other places, connected with it, “confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus;” or “Jesus the Lord.” This is substantially confessing the same as we are called to believe—that “God hath raised him from the dead;” the “*lordship*” of Jesus presupposing his resurrection, and including the “glory that followed.” The confession of this, therefore, implies the conviction and acknowledgment of the mediatorial character and work of Christ, and of his exaltation to “the right hand of power.”

Such “confession” of Christ is intimately connected with progressive and final salvation; and this connexion is a matter which may well engage the serious attention of all professed believers. The connexion is as pointedly and explicitly stated as that between believing and *justification*:—“with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” As there is no justification without faith, there is no final salvation without confession; that is, without “holding fast” the truth to the end, and in proof of its *being* held fast, *confessing Christ*. The words of Jesus himself are very peremptory:—“Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”†

* There is a manifest *hiatus* here in the manuscript, for which I am unable to account. I don't attempt to fill it up; but would refer the reader to the author's System. Theol., vol. II., pp. 735–6, and 747–8.

† Matth. x. 32, 33; Luke ix. 26.

Remember, my brethren, these are the solemn words of the Redeemer himself. They came from those "lips into which grace was poured," and from which no falsehood, no deceit, no guile ever proceeded. There is nothing in which the faithfulness of Jesus is more apparent, than in announcing the terms of discipleship. He never lures any to himself by illusory promises—by presenting fair and flattering prospects, which he knew were never to be realized. He was well aware that to confess him before men would require self-denial; the sacrifice of many worldly comforts and objects of desire; and submission to much that human nature shrinks from and deprecates. He warns of all this; but still he peremptorily adheres to the terms. In defiance of all temptations to the contrary—all temptations to apostasy, or to concealment, and temporizing, and conformity to the world in order to shun "the offence of the cross,"—there must be an open profession of his truth, a glorying in his cross, an adherence to his will, a fidelity to his cause,—the result and the expression of faith and love.

Let us consider, then, a little more particularly *what is implied in confessing Christ*, and close by noticing some of the *inducements to the indispensable duty*.

Faith, we have already said, is presupposed. The motto of every true follower of Jesus should be, "*I believed, therefore have I spoken.*"—It is openly to profess what we believe him *to be*, and what we believe him *to have done*. The subject of faith and of confession is the same; and, as stated in the passage before us, it is *the resurrection and supreme lordship of Jesus.*—There is included, then, the confession

1. Of *the fact*, that Christ *is risen*.—The resurrection of Jesus was the decision, the divine decision, of all controversies between him and his enemies. To speak of confessing this fact was touching the spring of wrathful emotion and vindictive malice in their bosoms. They had invented stories to discredit it; bribed the witnesses to perjure themselves by denying what they knew to be truth, and circulating what they knew to be false. But to confess Christ was to avow the belief of the fact, and conse-

quently the *disbelief* of everything pretended and asserted to the contrary; to declare *for* Christ against the Jewish rulers. And as the Gentile philosophers scorned the resurrection—treating it as worthy only of derision, to confess Christ was to brave this scorn; and avow the belief of that which they thus ridiculed, regarding all as no better than fools who gave it credit.

2. Jesus declared himself the promised Messiah; and he placed the truth of this claim on his resurrection. To confess Christ as risen, therefore, was to own him as *sustaining this official character*.—And many contend that *this is all*; and contend for it in such a way as would imply that it was enough to acknowledge *the title* as his, though you should deny all that peculiarly distinguished his *person* and constituted his *work* in that capacity; as if it were enough to allow him the *name*, whatever you might think and say either of what he was or of what he came to effect; as if these were not incomparably more important than the mere designation; as if indeed he could be confessed as the Messiah, unless he were confessed as being what the Messiah was to be, and as doing what the Messiah was to do! I must therefore add—

3. It is to confess his *personal dignity*, as proved by the fact. By his resurrection he was declared, or publicly determined to be, the Son of God:—and in confessing his resurrection, we confess his divine dignity as one with his Father, in opposition to those who, under the name of Christians, would divest him of his chief glory, and reduce him to the level of a fellow-man. The divine nature must be infinitely the more important and exalted view of his person. To deny this, if it is represented as belonging to him, must be to deny Christ. I know how uncharitable this will by some be reckoned. But most unreasonably. How can any man of common understanding expect those who believe Jesus to be truly and properly divine, to acknowledge those as confessing him who deny his divinity? To confess him *as man*,

* Rom. i. 3, 4.

and deny him *as God*, cannot be to confess him at all:—to confess the finite and deny the infinite!

4. It is to confess the *sufficiency and the exclusive efficacy of his righteousness and atonement*.—To confess him is, to avow this as the ground, and the sole ground, of our hopes before God. To confess his resurrection is to glory in his cross and passion,—to the sufficiency of which, as the divinely appointed propitiation for sin, his resurrection bore testimony. It is to confess before men what has ever been the “*offence of the cross*,”—our exclusive reliance on the grace of God through the merits of another; openly to declare our full conviction that there is no hope for sinners but in this; and to exult in it, to the entire mortification of all the native pride of the human heart. In opposition to every mode and description of self-dependence, to adopt the language of the Apostle, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

5. It is to own Christ’s *sole and supreme authority*.* We cannot confess “Jesus Christ THE LORD” without confessing this. We must acknowledge him as the only Lord of the conscience, whom we are in all things bound to obey, agreeably to the injunction given by the voice from the excellent glory, as Moses and Elias withdrew—“Hear ye HIM!” If we thus confess Christ as Lord, we shall follow his will, let the world say what they may. This *practical* confession of Christ is indispensable. In the confession of the lips without it there is no sincerity. The Apostle speaks of some who professed that they knew God, while in works they *denied* him. The practical denial was the true testimony. While their *mouths* said they *did* know him, their *conduct* said they *did not* know him:—and in such a case we are at no loss which to believe. And so is it in regard to the confession of Christ. We confess him not, if we call him “Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he says.” This is denying Christ. It is *saying* one thing and *acting* another.

* Acts ii. 36; Rom. xiv. 7—9.

6. The connexion shows us, that it includes the doctrinal and practical avowal of his *title to divine worship and adoration*. This is indeed included in confessing his *Godhead*; but we mention it now, because it is suggested so immediately by the following verses—"For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* We confess him, as divinely able to save, when we thus come to him, seeking the salvation we need.

In all this, the avowal must be sincere and open; no silent reserve, no ashamed concealment, no disguising and palliating of the truth, no trimming and artful evasion.

Among the many considerations by which believers should be induced to make this open confession of their Lord, let me notice and press upon their serious attention the following—

1. The blessed Jesus is *well entitled* to it, both for *what he is*, and for *what he hath done*. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."† *His* was the condescension: *ours* is the honour. O! what a stoop was it,—not merely from heaven to earth, but from deity to humanity! And shall *we*, poor worms of the dust, be ashamed to own our connexion with *Him*, who is "the brightness of his divine Father's glory, and the express image of his person?" How strange! how unreasonable! how unworthy the thought! His work was the most signal manifestation ever given of

* Verses 11—13.

† John i. 1—3, 14; 2 Cor. viii. 9.

all the perfections of the divine character:—and are *we* to be ashamed of that which is the study of angelic minds, and the theme of angelic songs, and which is the very highest of Jehovah's plans and doings,—the grandest effort of infinite intelligence—the very glory of the Godhead!—It is, moreover, the most wonderful expression of *love to us*—the opening of God's heart to man—the display of His “delight in mercy” in the bestowment of a gift transcending immeasurably all the other fruits and tokens of his munificence. And are *we* to be ashamed of our best benefactor! of Him who “loved us, and gave himself for us!” who hath stooped so low, and done and suffered so much for our benefit, for our deliverance from the greatest of all evils, and our introduction to the greatest and most enduring of all joys! Away with ingratitude so base—that would disown or shrink from acknowledging such a friend!

2. This confession is one of the required and reasonable *evidences of faith*. This is clearly implied here. Faith is the medium of interest in Christ, and confession is the manifestation and the proof of its reality. We have evidence of the sincerity of our faith only in proportion to our readiness to confess Christ. There is no faith, where there is no confession. And this evidence is of the utmost importance and value. Evidence of personal interest in Christ must be added to the evidence of the truth itself, to give stability to personal hope and confidence. The language of John with regard to brotherly love may with perfect propriety be applied to confessing Christ—“Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.”* And this confessing of Christ is one of the tests to be applied in fulfilling the apostolic injunction—“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”†

* 1 John iii. 19.

† 2 Cor. xiii. 5. “reprobates,” Gr. ἀδόκιμοι, without standing the proof; in correspondence with the preceding ιαυτοὺς δοκιμάζετε, prove your own selves.—ED.

3. *The connexion of confession with salvation.* The terms expressing this connexion are, as already noticed, equally explicit with those which express the connexion of faith with justification. Think of this, ye who fancy you may be believers in secret—believers, and sincere believers too, without, as you say, troubling other people with your religion, and letting every person you meet know your creed! This is only one of the many plausible maxims of prudential casuistry by which men would fain unite the interests of both worlds,—“serve God and mammon”—shun “the offence of the cross,” and yet secure its benefits. But it cannot be. Look at the Apostle’s statement. You must not only “believe unto righteousness,” but “confess unto salvation.” If you do not make confession, you do not believe; you are not justified, and cannot be saved.

4. The necessity of a profession that is *distinctive of the believer from the world*—a profession opposed to everything like *neutrality*. A man must be on one side or on the other. There must be no “halting between two opinions,” and compromising with the so-called *Christian* world, any more than with the world of the avowedly unbelieving and ungodly. The difference is very wide between the time when the Apostle wrote, and the circumstances in which believers were then placed, and *present* times and circumstances. Bearing the name of Christ was then a test of sincerity. But in our day, and in our country, some kind of profession is almost universal; and, instead of the designation *Christian* being a stigma, and setting a mark of peril on a man’s head, it is the common appellation, and is more than safe; it is reputable. Yet surely there is still some profession by which the true believer is distinguished from the mass of mere nominalists. There *is*—there *must* be such a profession;—a profession that is decided, discriminative, trying. There is a “coming out from the world,” and being “separate;”—there is a “seeking *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness”—a serious, deliberate and avowed preference of eternal things, uniformly and consistently apparent in the general tenor of the conduct; a living not only

“ soberly and righteously,” but “godly”—a “doing justly and loving mercy,” associated with “walking humbly with God;” a decided and open declaration of attachment to the Saviour, and to his people for his sake; and to spiritual exercises and spiritual pleasures above the engagements and enjoyments and converse of worldly society—such as marks a man out in the eyes of the world, as one whose intercourse they are not much disposed to court. Such, indeed, is the present state of society, that a Christian has reason to suspect whether he is professing his faith in Christ with sufficient distinctiveness, if he escapes the imputation of enthusiasm and methodism, and the shrugs and sneers of the ungodly. If the world commend a man as no bigot, but a liberal-minded man, that can speak and act and enjoy himself like his neighbours, the subject of the commendation may well be roused to self-jealousy and fear. *The eulogy of the world is the rebuke of his Master.*

There are temptations sadly prevalent to indecision—to the suppression of convictions—to the restraining and resisting of the truth’s influence,—for the sake of keeping well with the world. I believe the fear of the world’s scorn keeps more *now* from confessing Christ than in other and different times all the terrors of persecution ever did. But, *first*, let those who yield to such temptation, consider how—*unmanly* shall I say? their conduct is. In the concerns of life, you follow your own convictions; you take your own way; you mind not what others may think; you glory in your independence;—and yet *here*, in the highest of all concerns, you are the slave of the world’s opinion; you shrink, and hesitate; you suppress what you think, and utter what you do not think. I would say to you, as the Apostle says—“Quit you like men.” If there are convictions in your mind, follow them out. Put not your souls to jeopardy for the sake of human scorn, when, in compensation for it, you will have the approval of your conscience and your God.

Reflect, also, on the *ingratitude* of your conduct. What would you think of any one whom you had served, for whom you had made many and great sacrifices, and hazarded

life—being ashamed to own you, or to associate his name with yours? Yet this is the vile part you are acting to a better friend by infinite degrees than a fellow-creature can ever be to you.

Finally, think of your *danger*. Confession is *unto salvation*. Can you then be in a safe state, while you are declining such confession? You are *not* safe. Your danger is imminent. You have had many secret misgivings; but the world has still prevailed. O halt no longer between God and the world—between Christ and Belial!—“Who is on the Lord’s side? Who?” I put the question to every lingering, hesitating, undecided soul in this assembly. Come to the decision. Linger no more upon the boundary. No man can be happy, till, with full purpose of heart, he has made the transition from the world’s side, and taken his part with God; till he has openly confessed Christ and declared himself for his cause and people. There is no neutrality—no safe medium. To be undecided for Christ, is to be decided for the world. “HE THAT IS NOT WITH ME IS AGAINST ME!”

LECTURE XLVI.

ROMANS x. 12—17.

“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”

In verse eleventh the Apostle, in stating the universality of the gospel message of acceptance with God by faith in Christ, had confirmed his statement by a quotation from the prophecies of Isaiah, having direct allusion to the same subject—“The scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” And now, with especial reference to the word “*whosoever*” as including sinners of mankind without difference—he proceeds to say, “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

The *source* of salvation, in all its precious blessings, is here set before us in a very interesting light. It is *the rich grace of the Lord Jesus Christ*.—That *he* is the “Lord over all” is very clear from the whole context.* His supreme Lordship is one of the points of faith and confession spe-

* See verses 9, 14.

cified in the preceding verses as belonging to the word which the Apostles preached. This Lordship was the divine reward of his obedience unto death.* The whole administration of grace, as a branch of the government of the world, is intrusted to his hands:—so that it is his to bestow all the blessings of salvation.† And this implies, that all these blessings are bestowed on the ground of his own righteousness and sacrifice—all in rich and free mercy:—He is “rich unto all that call upon him.”

This is spoken of him in his mediatorial character. Before he appeared in that character, he was “rich”—rich as God, the Maker and Proprietor of the universe, and the bountiful Author of all existing good. It is of his native *divine* riches the Apostle speaks when he says—“Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.”‡

It was in the exercise of love that “passeth knowledge” that he thus stooped; assuming our nature, and suffering in it unto death. And he is *now* rich *as Mediator*. On his ascending up on high, he “received gifts for men:”—“it pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell.” His riches are “unsearchable.” He is rich in *possession*—having committed to his hands an inexhaustible fulness of blessing. He is rich in *bestowment*; and all that he does bestow he bestows in free unfettered *bounty* and *munificence*—“without money and without price.” These ideas are evidently and strongly included. We might say of a man who merely *possessed* abundance that he was *rich*: but if we said of him that he was rich to all that applied to him, we should mean more; we should express the idea of bountifulness or liberality—of giving freely and without equivalent. The phrase, applied to the exalted Redeemer, expresses his constant readiness to give—the exuberance of his mediatorial grace. The treasures of blessing stand ever open; and with a hand of royal bounty he confers his “durable riches.”

The verses further teach us the way by which a partici-

* Phil. ii. 6—10.

† John xvii. 2.

‡ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

pation in His riches is obtained:—"He is rich unto *all* that call upon him; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." This is in full harmony with the former statement. There is a perfect consistency between the ideas of free bounty on the part of the giver and application to him on the part of the receiver. Can there be a stronger expression of free bounty than that which our Lord makes when he says—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened?"*

The very terms before us more than imply that *calling* presupposes *faith*: verse 14. "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" This is most explicit. Calling implies faith, just as much as faith implies hearing. If we grant (and how can we deny?) that there is no believing in him of whom we have not heard, the same principle should necessitate the conclusion (for the questions are alike intended to convey the idea of impossibility) that there is no *calling* without believing.† I need hardly say, that calling means not the mere utterance of words with the lips, but the expression of the real desire of the heart. Now, in order to this, the sinner's mind must be in some measure made sensible of the unspeakable value of the blessings sought. All seeking implies this. Nothing whatever will be *sought* till there is some perception of its value—some conviction of its being worth seeking.

That which is here sought, is not *faith*. The prayer is not an unbelieving prayer for *faith*:—it is a believing prayer for *salvation*. There is often great confusion of mind to be found on this subject; and the confusion arises from want of simple conceptions of what believing is—or rather, I should say, of what *faith* is: for, by a kind of—fatality shall I call it? many persons who have a perfectly clear conception,

* Luke xi. 9, 10.

† Comp. Heb. xi. 6.

on all other subjects, of what is meant by believing, have their heads full of mysticism whenever they speak of faith. But, as we have already said, to *believe* and to *have faith* are the same thing. The difficulty is to get men persuaded to take the scripture terms in their simple sense: and nothing can be simpler than the New Testament statements.*

It is no uncommon thing to hear persons speak of their being desirous to believe, but not able—of their having the *will*, but wanting the *power*: This is a delusion, the result of the mysticism just alluded to. There can be no such state of mind. The want of ability consists solely in the want of will—the indisposition of heart; its aversion to either the humility or the purity of the Gospel; its pride, and its love of this present world. These are the causes that keep sinners back from Christ.† When men are taught to sing—“I would, but can’t repent;” and—“O! could I but believe! - Then all would easy be: I would but cannot”—they are taught to utter words that express neither correct philosophy nor sound divinity. The testimony of the Bible is—“The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”‡ Nothing whatever prevents any one from coming and taking, but the want of will. It is necessary to affirm this, in order to justify God in the condemnation of unbelievers: for, were the inability of sinners of any other kind than moral, the excuse derived from it would be a valid and sufficient one. Beyond question, it is the duty of *all* to “call upon the name of the Lord:”—but the duty, like every other, includes the obligation to the state of mind and heart requisite for the right fulfilment of it. It is the duty of all to pray; but acceptable prayer must be prayer *in faith*; and the duty of prayer implies the duty of believing in that name in which prayer is to be offered. Why be startled at this? It may be illustrated by a parallel case. The first

* As in John xx. 30, 31.

† John v. 40; Luke xiii. 34.

‡ Rev. xxii. 17.

requisition of God's law is that of *love to himself*. This is the only state of heart from which any truly acceptable obedience can be rendered to any of the divine precepts. Every other command of God, therefore, should be regarded as implying or presupposing this state of heart. It is the duty of every man to be true in his words and honest in his dealings. But it is his duty to maintain honesty and truth from *love to God*. If I am asked then, would you dissuade an unbeliever from praying? I answer *No*; any more than I would dissuade a man who gives evidence of an ungodly state of heart from speaking truth and acting honestly. But, as I tell the latter that his truth and honesty being unassociated with love to God as their principle, are destitute of what is essential to their being acceptable in God's sight; so I tell the former that his prayer is in the same kind and in the same degree deficient and unacceptable.—“The ploughing of the wicked is *sin*”—that is, the industry of the wicked man, being uninfluenced by any regard to God—to his authority, to his glory, to his grace—being purely selfish and secular—is but a seeming *virtue*; in itself abstractly good; but in the eyes of Him who looks to the heart, and who, in looking to the heart, regards primarily its state of disposition towards himself, there is *sin* in all of even its most apparently exemplary and useful toils. Are we then to command the wicked *not to plough?* By no means:—but we are to warn him that in the sight of God his very industry is *sin*, and we are to tell him why; and thus to awaken him to a proper consideration of the first principle of every act that God holds good and virtuous. Thus truth and honesty and industry are in themselves good, but when without the fear of God as their principle, they are in the spirit of them, which is the spirit of ungodliness, radically defective and *evil*.* So it is with prayer. In itself it is good—a thing which it would be as wrong to forbid, as it would be to forbid honesty and truth and industry:—but still we must warn unbelievers, that while they continue to reject the Gospel, they are without

* Comp. the Author's Lectures on Proverbs, vol. ii. p. 385.

the plea which alone can make the prayer of a sinner acceptable to God.

That it is a believing prayer for salvation that is meant is evident from the very passage quoted:—"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call."* The words may seem immediately and primarily to refer to deliverance from the judgments threatened against Jerusalem. But these, when brought upon the wicked and unbelieving for such a cause, were but significant preludes to a more fearful and permanent destruction.† Paul here applies the passage indiscriminately to Jews and Gentiles in regard to the salvation revealed to both in the Gospel. And so indeed does Peter.‡ "Those who called on the name of the Lord" was a designation of the disciples of Christ—of believers. For *them* there was deliverance from the judgments by which Jerusalem was visited; and that deliverance was but a type and pledge of a better and greater.—In the passage before us, we have one of the proofs of our Saviour's divinity. He, as we have seen, is "the Lord," who is to be "called upon" for salvation; and the proof receives a great augmentation of strength when taken in connexion with the passage cited and applied to him:—for in the prophet it clearly refers to JEHOVAH the God of Israel.

The connexion of the series of questions in the two following verses, next demands our attention. We have already commented on the first taken by itself. But they naturally lead in succession to each other, and form a chain which terminates in one conclusion. That conclusion is,—I mean this is the chief point which the series of connected queries is designed to establish—the necessity that the testimony of the Gospel should come with the same evidence of inspired authority as that which attended and accredited the

* Joel ii. 32.

† Comp. Acts iii. 23.

‡ Comp. Acts ii. 21. with 39.

announcements of the prophets under the old economy. The Jews received the word of God from inspired messengers,* who prefaced their announcements with—" *Thus saith the Lord:*" and satisfactorily proved their divine commission. Such divinely inspired messengers were necessary, to give the new Dispensation the same authority,—the same divine establishment with the old. We shall see how the questions lead on naturally to this point.

1. "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" We have already said that the calling is the expression of faith. When a sinner comes to feel his need of salvation; and is convinced that Jesus *is* what the Gospel represents Him—a divine and all-sufficient Saviour—he will then "call upon Him" in earnest for the salvation which he is sensible he needs, and believes Jesus, and Jesus alone, able to bestow. No one will think of seeking from another what he does not believe him either able or willing to give.

And as faith is necessary to calling; so is hearing to believing: "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"—that is, of whose existence and work and character they have never been informed. It were surely a waste of words to set about explaining this. The proposition that a man cannot believe what he has never heard of is self-evident.

The same may be said of the next question also:—"How shall they hear without a preacher?" In order to their hearing the Gospel, some one must carry it to them. It is not the way of God to impart to each individual mind, by direct inspiration, the knowledge of His truth. He inspires chosen individuals; and by them it is, with suitable credentials, communicated to others. The fourth question is the one to which the others lead, and which more especially claims attention:—"How shall they preach, except they be sent?"

It is manifest that their being "*sent*" here has no reference to any commission from fellow-men. The words have

too often been, most absurdly, and out of all connexion with the Apostle's object and argument, and with no little arrogance and presumption, applied to the license of a bishop or a presbytery; as if it were a violation of apostolic rule, as here laid down, that any one should presume to declare the Gospel unless *thus* sent. We will not enter into the subject of licenses to preach; for the question before us has no reference to the appointment either of a bishop, a presbytery, or a Christian church. It has reference to the appointment of *God himself*. To be *sent* means to be sent *as Apostles*.* And the question expresses the necessity of a class of men accredited by God—to declare infallibly His truth, with evidence from Himself;—of a class of men on a level with the prophets of old.† The words have a special reference to the first promulgation of the Gospel in the world. It would never have been established *as from God*, unless men inspired by the Holy Ghost, and endowed with miraculous powers, had been thus commissioned. “How shall they preach?” They might have preached, it is true, without such commission; but their preaching would have wanted *authority*. The words, therefore, are not at all applicable in our day. They refer to the attested and accredited preaching of the ambassadors of Christ and of God—to the preaching of those men who could say, “We pray you in Christ's stead—as though God did beseech by us.” Those who were sent still preach by their writings. It is still “through their word” that men believe. The authority is still *in them*; not in any living man. No man living can *have* the authority himself, or can add to it in any degree by virtue of any human commission, or any dignity, real or imaginary, of ecclesiastical office.

That such ambassadors should be commissioned and sent, had been predicted by Isaiah,‡—verse 15. “And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace,

* John xvii. 18.

† Jer. xxiii. 16, 21, 28; and 1 John iv. 6.

‡ Isa. lii. 7.

and bring glad tidings of good things!" It is true that the decree of Cyrus was gladly welcomed by the captive Jews: and to this some have applied the language. But the whole context more than warrants, it demands our interpreting it as having a direct reference to tidings transcendently more excellent and glorious:—"Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people: the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished."* This is a higher salvation than the deliverance from Babylon: and although that deliverance is used as a kind of prophetic type of that by Messiah, the latter is the true subject of the tidings supposed by the prophet to bring such joy and exultation with them. Beauty has by some been thought to lie entirely in the associations of the mind with the object to which it is ascribed. We shall not enter into the discussion of the theory:—but in the instance before us it seems to hold true. The messenger of good tidings is supposed to come, bounding with all his speed, over the mountains that were "round about Jerusalem." The "feet" of the messenger are "beautiful" from their association with the message. It is the feet that bear the hastening messenger along; and his speed delights the heart on account of the news he brings.

Mark the description of the Gospel message. It is "good tidings of *peace*"—of peace between offending men and their justly offended God; of peace thence arising in the conscience and heart—tranquillity amidst all the fluctuating scenes of life, and freedom from the tortures of conscious guilt and the "fearful looking-for of judgment;" of a serene spirit delivered

* Isa. li. 4—6.

from the turbulence of contending passions and unruly desires; and of mutual peace under the peaceful reign of the Saviour.* —It is “good tidings of *good things*.” This is a more comprehensive expression. It includes all the precious blessings of everlasting salvation. That may well be so denominated, which drew forth the following utterance of adoring praise: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.”† Tidings of peace to a country long ravaged by the desolating scourge of war would be “good tidings of good.” So would tidings of pardon be to the condemned; of sight to the blind; of freedom to the prisoner; of abundance to the destitute and famishing. And what is the prophetic description of the anticipated blessings of the Gospel?—“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.”‡

When we hear of “good tidings of peace”—“of good tidings of good things,”—we very naturally ask, *How* is this peace—*how* are these good things to be obtained and enjoyed? In the present instance, and indeed in every instance

* Luke ii. 10—14; Acts x. 36; Eph. ii. 13—18; Rom. v. 1.

† Eph. i. 3—6.

‡ Isa. Ixi. 1—3.

in which the tidings can be of any efficacy in imparting joy and hope, they must themselves include the answer to the question. There must be not only a proclamation of peace and blessing, but a satisfactory declaration of the way in which the peace and blessing are to be enjoyed. There would be no good tidings at all otherwise. The reply to the question is to be found in the Gospel Report. *That* is contained in the preceding context; consisting substantially of the doctrine of free justification through faith in a dying and rising Saviour.* *He* is “the Lord our righteousness.” The Gospel is an authoritative message from God to sinners, assuring them that He is reconciled through Jesus Christ, and beseeching them to be reconciled to Him,—to receive the offers of mercy, and accept of eternal life as a free gift in the name of his Son. Well does this message deserve the appellations given to it in this verse.

How joyfully are such tidings as we have before described from the prophet—the tidings of “liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound,”—of “comfort to the mourners and binding up to the broken in heart”—how joyfully are they welcomed when they relate to temporal situation! With what ecstasy was the trump of jubilee, announcing the return of “the acceptable year of the Lord,” heard by the oppressed and disinherited through all the coasts of Israel! With how much greater ecstasy ought the tidings of the Gospel to be hailed, proclaiming spiritual and everlasting freedom and eternal inheritance! Yet how lamentably different is the fact. The same prophet who announces the coming tidings, mourns over the partial and limited acceptance of them—in terms expressive of wonder and pity and indignation and grief:†—verse 16. “But they have not all obeyed the gospel: for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?”

The words were mournfully true during our Lord’s personal ministry—and they continued true both as to Jews and Gentiles in the subsequent propagation of his Gospel.‡

* Verses 8—10. † Isa. liii. 1. ‡ John. xii. 37, 38; 1 Cor. i. 22, 23.

The application of the prophet's words by the Apostle in the present passage shows that he considered them as expressing the fewness of those who should receive the Gospel both when declared by Jesus himself and by his Apostles; and, in general, by whomsoever proclaimed. This partial reception of the Gospel, the Apostle insinuates, ought not to be a stumbling-block to any—no argument against the divine commission and Messiahship of Jesus:—it should rather be regarded as one of the prophetic marks by which he was to be distinguished from all impostors. *Here* is the prediction:—“He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him: he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”* Had it been otherwise with Jesus and his doctrine, they would have wanted one characteristic distinction of what the prophets had described.

Verse 17. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The term rendered *hearing* in this verse is the word rendered in verse sixteenth *report*. “Who hath believed our *report*? So then faith cometh by a *report*; and the *report* by the word or authority of God.” The common view is that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word, i. e. by the declaration of the word—of God: that the hearing of the word is necessary to its being believed, and the declaration of it to its being heard. And this is quite in harmony with the spirit of the context. The *proposed* rendering makes no material difference on the meaning of the *first* clause; inasmuch as the *report* must necessarily be brought to the ear and *heard* in order to its being believed; for “how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard?”† But in the *second* clause it gives an interesting and important addition to the sense—namely, that the *report*, by the hearing of which it is that “faith

* Isa. liii. 2, 3.

† Verse 14.

cometh," is published *by the command of God*.* The Gospel comes in the form of a report or message—not an uncertain, unascertained rumour, but a digested and authenticated announcement, proclaimed by divine order, and having in it all the weight of divine sanction. This agrees well with what we were led to say as to the import of the question, "How shall they preach *except they be sent?*" as expressing the necessity of a divine commission. Yes, my brethren; the Gospel comes not to us in the shape of a vague rumour, indistinct in its statements and uncertain in its evidence. It comes from God. It has, in itself and in its accompaniments, all the evidence of a divine original. From the assurance of this *three things* arise:—

1. Confidence—satisfied, steadfast, delightful confidence. O what a rest the soul finds when we are assured that the testimony on which it reposes is the testimony of the God of truth! This alone gives satisfaction. No voice but that of God can say effectually to the troubled conscience—"Peace, be still!" In no word but that of God himself "with whom we have to do" can we trust for eternity without distressing and dreary misgivings.

2. The necessity of constant appeal to the divine word, for the authority of all that *we* speak and that *you* hear. This written word has the same authority as the preaching of the Apostles. It is of them that Jesus hath said, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." The authority is not in us: it is *here*—in this Book. To *it* we make our appeal; and wish you to bring everything we say to this test, with diligent study, and seriousness, and prayer. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is

* Διὰ ρήματος Θεοῦ, "by means of ('by' as its instrument or vehicle) the word of God." So Alford and others. But διὰ has frequently the sense in which it is here taken by the Author: e. g. ἀπόστολος διὰ θελήματος Θεοῦ (1 Cor. i. 1 et loc. al.)—an apostle *by* the will of God, as indicating the origin of the official position. So the Gospel report is *by the word of God*; has its origin in the divine *command*—a sense in which ρῆμα frequently occurs.—ED.

no light in them." There are many who come to church or meeting to hear such and such a preacher's views. But what signifies it what are the views of any preacher? If they are not taken from our Lord and his Apostles, they can do the hearers no good, but harm that may prove irretrievable and infinite. We are anxious that the faith of every one of our hearers should stand, not in the wisdom of man, but in the wisdom and power of God.

3. The vanity of all other dependences besides that which has the sanction and support of divine authority. Such support and sanction are indispensable to a right foundation for our hopes towards God. The sole inquiry with each of you should be—What is the message that comes by the authority of God? Receive no report of peace and of good without trying it. Take nothing upon trust.*

The admonition is peculiarly necessary in this our day. It is a day of free discussion, and consequently of abounding error. I say *consequently*. For, painful as some of our modern heresies may be, I cannot but regard the large proportion of the evil as having sprung from one general *good*—a good which I consider as one of the most hopeful symptoms of our times:—I mean the disposition to make a more direct appeal for every doctrine to the Scriptures; the throwing aside of the trammels—the thought-enchanting trammels, of human systems. This is a new thing; and, like every new thing, it is apt to carry some into aberrations and extremes. But it tends to ultimate good. Men's minds will settle down into more calm thinking; and the humble, temperate, leisurely, and prayerful study of the Bible itself as the original and sole authority, will issue in greater simplicity and unity of sentiment and cordiality of feeling amongst the people of God. But in the midst of the feverish excitement look to God for sober-mindedness;—and without regard either to what is old or to what is new, let your only source of instruction and ground of faith be the testimony of His own word.

* 1 John iv. 1.

We may see from the passage the principle and the necessity of missions to the heathen. They are in ignorance of "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." They are perishing for lack of this knowledge; shutting out and abusing even the light they have; living without God, and in a state of woful unfitness for the kingdom of heaven. And as the Gospel alone can be the means of their salvation, the principle of missions and their necessity are both expressed in the two simple questions—"How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and, How shall they hear without a preacher?"

It is the predicted purpose of God, that "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea:" and it is the express command of Christ that his "gospel should be preached to every creature." Preachers then must be sent to proclaim it. We cannot send preachers accredited by miraculous signs. But we can send them the writings of the original ambassadors, along with living publishers of the same doctrine; and we have confidence in the divine word as being its own witness; as carrying in it the character and the living power of its divine Author; as presenting such a contrast to all the folly and impurity and inefficient worthlessness of the heathen idolatries, and to everything bearing the name of religion that is merely human, as to evince its superior origin; and, above all, as having the aid of the Spirit of the living God pledged to attend it, by which means it has already, in innumerable cases, proved its effective energy—as "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds: casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." The proof is before us in the history of missions; and does not every believer, indeed, feel it in himself? We have every encouragement to persevere—to send the Apostles and Prophets, in the form of their writings, that though dead they may yet speak; and to accompany the written word with the preaching of the Gospel; "praying the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."

All may not receive the message—even although it is “good tidings of peace.” Missionaries of the Cross may still have occasion, with wonder and pity and sorrow, to say, “Who hath believed our report?” But in no case shall their labours be utterly fruitless; and at times, through the tender mercy of our God, there may be success far beyond expectation,—so that, instead of the exclamation of despondency, their “mouth may be filled with laughter and their tongue with singing;” and their language may be, “The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.”

The Gospel is for all alike. There are no exceptions. We say to each one of our hearers—it is for *you*. As there is no difference between Jew and Greek, neither is there any distinction between the most diversified characters. There is *one* point in which all agree—“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* And as all alike *need* it, all are alike welcome to its provisions. The words before us assure every sinner that if he comes to Christ for salvation; comes in earnest; comes with the spirit of self-renunciation and dependence on mercy; comes believing that Jesus is able, and alone able, to save,—he shall find what he seeks: “for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.” There is no mysticism in the matter. Look at the testimony. If it suits your case, and you are satisfied it is from God, rely upon the atonement and grace which it reveals:—lift a believing eye to the divine Saviour, and hope in His mercy.

* Chap. iii. 22, 23.

LECTURE XLVII.

ROMANS x. 18—21.

“But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First, Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gaiusaying people.”

WE have had occasion to notice on the two preceding verses, that the Gospel comes to sinners in the form of a “*report*,” or message;—not, however, of a vague, uncertain, unauthenticated rumour, but “*by the word*,” that is, by the authority and express appointment of God:—that it comes by inspired and accredited messengers, as did the ancient communications by the prophets. The report is proclaimed in the ears of men—they hear it; and by the proclamation and the hearing of the report, “*faith cometh*.” It is proclaimed, *to be believed*—“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith;”* and, the Spirit of God accompanying it, and opening the minds of sinners, to a spiritual perception of its divine excellence, it is received in the love of it to their salvation.

It was necessary, then, that the Gentiles should *hear*, in order to their knowing, understanding, and believing the

* Chap. i. 17.

truth. And the fact, as intimated in the first of these verses, was in correspondence with this necessity, and with prophetic intimation—"Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."

It seems quite clear, that the question, "Have they not heard?" refers not to the lessons of nature respecting the being and perfections of God, but to *the Gospel*. The entire context shows this.* And to my mind, I confess, it appears not less obvious, that the words quoted by the Apostle do *not*, in the connexion from which they are taken, relate to the Gospel, but to the manifestations of God in the works of *nature*:—Look at them as they occur in the Psalm—"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language;† their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun. Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run his race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." There seems to me an intended association in the psalm, partly in the way of comparison and partly of contrast, of the two modes in which Deity has made himself known—*nature* and *revelation*. The verses quoted relate to the former; those which follow to the latter.‡

From the circumstance, however, of the Apostle's here applying the Psalmist's words to the spread of the Gospel, some have been led to conclude that such must necessarily have been their original and primary meaning as used by the Psalmist himself. But this does seem to me an unnatural straining of very plain and simple, though beautiful and poet-

* Verses 14—18.

† *Where* in our authorised version is a supplement which mars the sense.—ED.

‡ Verses 7—11.

ical language. I cannot understand David otherwise, than as describing the manifestation of Deity in the visible heavens, and the universality of the lesson thus conveyed, although, alas! so ill read and ill understood by blinded and depraved men. The sense seems that given to the passage, in the beautiful paraphrase of Addison—

“ What though in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice, nor sound,
Amidst their radiant orbs be found?
In Reason’s ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing, as they shine,
‘The hand that made us is divine.’ ”

How then comes it that the Apostle uses the words of the psalm to express the general publication of the Gospel? Let none of those who hear me be startled, as if I were adopting a hazardous principle of interpretation, when I say that I take this to be an instance of the simple *accommodation* of words from one subject to another of a kindred nature.

There are, as has been observed, two kinds of preaching—the preaching of Nature, and the preaching of Revelation. The former is universal in its extent. What part of the inhabited world is there, where the heavens show not the glory of God?—where in all the works of His hands, are His being, and power, and wisdom, and goodness not manifest? It is on this fact that the Apostle founds his affirmation of the inexcusableness of the ignorance of God among the heathen.* The latter was from the beginning *designed* to be universal. Till the fulness of time it was, in a great degree, though not entirely, confined to the Jews. But the Law, as given to them, was introductory to the Gospel: and the Gospel was meant *for all*—meant to be as extensive as the preaching of creation. I understand the Apostle, then, as in this instance, simply making use of the Psalmist’s words respecting creation as fitly expressing the truth

* Chap. i. 19, 20.

respecting the Gospel. The application of them is most natural and appropriate. The Lord's commission was—“ Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ;”* and Paul, writing to the Colossians, says—“ Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world ; which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven.”† I quote this for the sake of showing, that the application of the Psalmist's words by him to the spread of the Gospel is not stronger than his language on the same subject elsewhere. The words are not to be taken with absolutely literal strictness. The meaning is that the Gospel had already been published very extensively, and that the publication was unrestricted, comprehending men of every “kindred and tongue.” The design of carrying it to the ends of the earth was prosecuted as far as indefatigable zeal could in the time accomplish, during the days of the Apostles ; and it was in the full career of progressive fulfilment.

Let no one conclude, from what I have said, that I am favourable to the practice of what is usually understood by *accommodation* in regard to the application of Scripture language. I am as hostile to it as possible. I deem it most mischievous ; and you will bear me witness that in the whole course of my ministry I have never had recourse to it. Although, therefore, I cannot conceive it to follow from Paul's using the language of David respecting the heavens to express a fact respecting the spread of the Gospel, that David's words must necessarily have had the same reference, and have been intended as prophetic ; and although I think the simple assertion of a fact in borrowed language, when the transference of the language does not lead to any mistake of the meaning, is quite admissible and harmless ;—yet even this should be very sparingly dealt in, lest peradventure, misapprehension should be produced.—The instance before us has not more difficulty in it than that which occurs in a preceding part of the chapter,‡ where the Apostle applies to the simplicity of the Gospel the terms which by Moses had been

* Mark xvi. 15.

† Col. i. 6, 23.

‡ Verses 6—8.

used respecting the Law which he had been employed to give to Israel. No one thinks of inferring from this, that the terms, as used by Moses, had an original and primary reference to *the Gospel*, and were *prophetic* of *its* nature. Why, then, should we be startled when we find him applying to the Gospel the words of David respecting Creation, any more than the words of Moses respecting the Law?—Yet, I repeat, we must be cautious in our imitation of this. The man who, in any way, applies passages of the divine word to purposes different from those which they were originally designed to answer, abuses that word. He may discover great ingenuity—but he “handles the word of God deceitfully.” It is not always so intended. Far from it. The principle that prompts it is not seldom a mistaken piety, leading those who are influenced by it to fancy they are honouring the Author of the Bible by finding in all its phraseology what is spiritual. The truth is, however, that it is no business of ours to make any part of the word of the Lord more or less spiritual than it is. To understand that word is to understand what the Holy Spirit, in each particular portion of it, intended to express. All *beyond* this, as well as all *diverse* from this, is, in as far as the particular passage is concerned, *our own*. It may be in harmony with His mind; but this is not the question. The question is, not merely Is it the mind of the Spirit? but Is it the mind of the Spirit *here*? Now the practice of dealing in accommodation serves to set aside this first principle of all interpretation,—misleading people’s minds,—making them fancy they understand the Bible, and that in a way far superior to their neighbours,—far deeper, it may be, and far more spiritual; and to smile in contempt at the plain meaning, as quite common-place and shallow; when, in fact, they have their minds filled with the false commentaries and glosses of men. It is no mark of wisdom to interpret Scripture according to the mere sound of words, taking them to express a sentiment, however good, which is not in the connexion, the sentiment they were meant to express; and making them, in this view of them, the basis of discourse;—or to bring more out of a passage than was ever intended

by the Spirit of God to be in it—thus going deeper than the Holy Ghost, and affecting to be wiser than God. The question, “What saith the scripture?” amounts to—What does the Spirit in any passage mean to express? That is the one point. We should endeavour neither to go beyond this, nor to keep within it, nor to depart from it. But the mere expression of a fact or a sentiment in borrowed language, when there is no mistake or misapprehension produced by it, is evidently harmless. This is what we conceive to be done in the two instances in this chapter.

The next object of the Apostle is to show that the Jews had abundant previous intimations of the facts *as they had now turned out*: that is, with regard to the extension of the good tidings of the Gospel to the Gentiles—verse 19. “Did not Israel know?” that is, Had not Israel *information*—the means of knowledge? “I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.”*

This is a quotation very differently circumstanced from that in the preceding verse. *There* the statement is simply made of a matter of fact—namely, that the Gentiles *had* heard—Gentiles of every nation indiscriminately: the matter of fact, as the preceding context shows, being not only that they had *heard*, but that they had heard by *divinely accredited messengers*—messengers attested by miraculous credentials to have divine authority for what they did, in “opening the door of faith to the Gentiles.”†

But the quotation is, in *this* instance, adduced in proof that the Israelites had *sufficient means of information that so it was to be*. The words, therefore, must be quoted in their original meaning, else they would not be in point. They could be no proof. The words in the song of Moses were uttered when God *had been* provoked by their rebellions and idolatries, and in prospect of their future provocations. They express very strikingly what actually took place “in the be-

* See Deut. xxxii. 21.

† See Acts xiv. 27, compared with chap. xv. 12:—and Acts x. 44—45, compared with chap. xi. 15; xv. 7—9.

ginning of the Gospel." The Jews were exceedingly jealous of the honour which God had put upon them—proudly and scornfully jealous of it—under the self-complacent fancy that it was an honour to be *permanently* their own. God was *their* God; the Law was *their* law; the fathers were *their* fathers; the prophets were *their* prophets; and the Messiah was, they expected, to be *their* Messiah,—His kingdom to be *their* kingdom, and all its honours and privileges theirs,—the Gentiles to be admissible to these only by subjection to *them*. By the calling of the Gentiles, therefore, they were "moved to jealousy;" their proudly flattering distinction being by this means, as they thought, done away. It is not the jealousy of humble and holy emulation that is meant, but of pride, and envy, and bitter virulence—"I will anger you," said God. On many occasions was their fury against the Gentiles, and against the preachers of the cross for their favour to the Gentiles, displayed.*

"By them that are *no people*"—that is, no people *of mine*—not before the people of God—not possessing the relation to God by which the seed of Abraham were distinguished.†—And they are called "a *foolish nation*," with immediate reference to what had been said in the preceding part of the verse:‡—"They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people: I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation." Mark the two parts of the verse:—"They have moved *me* to jealousy with that which is not God;" "and I will move *them* to jealousy with that which is not a people:"—that is, I have made myself, the true and only God, known to them as their God:—I have thus conferred upon them a precious privilege and a high honour; but they have acted unworthily of the honour and the privilege; they have given preference to that which is no God—to the worthless nonentities of heathen worship:

* See Acts xiii. 44—50; xvii. 5, 13, &c.

‡ Deut. xxxii. 21.

† Eph. ii. 11, 12.

and in just retribution, “I will move them to jealousy” by conferring the abused privilege on a people on whom I had not bestowed it, and whom they affected to despise for the want of it.—“*They provoked me to anger with their vanities; and I will provoke them to anger with a foolish or vain nation*”—that is, with a nation given up to the very “vanities” with which they have provoked me.

This language of Moses might be conceived an intimation not very direct and obvious: the Apostle, therefore, adds another—verse 20. “But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.”* The Apostle quotes *the sense.*† In the passage cited, Jehovah speaks by the prophet. He represents Himself as sought by those who previously had known nothing of Him; as found of them who, from their previous utter ignorance, could not seek Him; as manifesting Himself to them who were making no inquiries after Him.—The Apostle’s expression, “*I was made manifest*”—evidently corresponds to His “saying,” according to the prophet, “Behold me, behold me.” These words plainly imply God’s making Himself known. He does so; and, in doing it, invites attention to the discovery. He exhibits Himself in the Gospel, both by verbal description, and, more especially, by the work of salvation as wrought by Christ, containing the clearest and fullest and most interesting display ever given of the combined excellencies of His character:—and in making the exhibition, He says, with all earnestness and persuasive love, “Behold me, behold me!”—It is obvious that *this comes first*. God manifests Himself; and in the manifestation of Himself, He is found; and thus found by such as had previously sought Him not.—“Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.” When the Gospel comes, it is like a light rising upon the darkness, and dispelling it: it is light unanticipated, unsought. Jehovah came to the Gentiles by

* See Isa. lxv. 1.

† Compare remarks on verse 25th of chapter ninth, p. 308.—ED

the Gospel, like a person paying an unlooked-for visit—an unknown stranger arriving suddenly.—The whole language of God by the prophet, evidently conveys the idea of previous ignorance, and sudden manifestation; and this manifestation followed by the finding, on the part of those to whom the discovery is made, of Him by whom it is made.—The idea of suddenness is strongly expressed by the words, "*I am found of them that sought me not.*" The finding is not represented as the result of a long process of previous seeking—of "feeling after" God. The Gentiles, immersed in all the ignorance and stupid sottishness of their idolatries, received the "knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent," as a prisoner who had been long immured in the gloom of a dungeon, without a ray of light, and to whom darkness had become so familiar that he had given up thinking of any thing else, would receive the beams of heaven, on the window being suddenly opened that had been closed and fastened with bars of iron.

"*Seeking God*," as the phrase is generally used in the Scriptures, is a gracious exercise of soul, presupposing some acquaintance with the object sought, and some appreciation of its excellence and desirableness. It is not seeking, to find out something of which there exists no previous idea; but seeking the further discovery of that which has begun to be perceived, and the further enjoyment of that which has been partially tasted.—It sometimes means, too, to apply in earnest for the favour and mercy of God, from an apprehension of the fearful realities of His revealed displeasure:—"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."* This admonition implies that God has discovered himself, both in wrath and in mercy; the former to alarm, the latter to encourage. And

* Isa. lv. 6, 7.

it is remarkable, that the language just quoted stands in immediate connexion with a declaration of the calling of the Gentiles of quite a parallel description to that in the passage before us:—“Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.”*

With such language respecting the Gentiles stands contrasted that *to Israel*:—verse 21. “But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

These words follow immediately, in the prophet, those before quoted.†—Isaiah was thoroughly acquainted with the history of the Jewish people; with all the wonderful manifestations of God’s “goodness and forbearance and long-suffering” towards them; with the displays of his character as drawn with truth, though under the influence at the time of a fearfully perverse spirit, by Jonah:—“I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.”‡—The character of Jehovah, and that of the people he had to deal with, appeared in perpetual contrast, through the whole period of their history. It is a history of divine patience, and of human unreasonableness, ingratitude, and infatuated presumption. Never were terms more true than those in this verse—“All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” And, whether used of Israel, or of others, nothing can be more wonderful. It is wonderful on God’s part; it is wonderful on man’s. That man should stretch out his hands to God—the dependent and sinful creature supplicating the supremely righteous and holy Creator,—this is as it ought to be. But here—the Creator stretches out His hands to the creature; God entreats man; the offended Sovereign beseeches the offending subject! And, wonderful as

* Isa. lv. 4, 5.

† Isa. lxv. 2.

‡ Jon. iv. 2.

this is—"not the manner of man, O Lord God!"—is there not something still *more* wonderful, that He should have to complain of want of success—of His invitations and entreaties being disregarded and scorned!

Yet such was the mournful fact! His entreaties were condescending, forbearing, earnest, persevering, disinterested:—They were *condescending*:—how infinitely so! When a father entreats a child, a master a servant, a monarch a subject, there is condescension; and we admire it in a peculiar degree when the design of the entreaty is the benefit of those addressed:—but what is all the condescension of creature to creature?—of creature the most exalted to creature the most insignificant and mean? We answer the question by another—What is the difference between any one creature and any other, compared with the difference between the Eternal God and the highest of them all?

They were *forbearing*:—for there was a principle in the divine nature, that drew powerfully in the opposite direction;—a principle, of the force of which we can form a most inadequate conception, that pleaded urgently for a different course—God's hatred of sin. This hatred is infinite. He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." The impulse of this holy principle is to express itself in the immediate infliction of the tokens of displeasure—the deserved punishment. When God by the prophets remonstrated with Israel in such terms as, "O do not that abominable thing which I hate!" He expressed His detestation of the evil, and gave them to know how strong was the principle which His goodness was, as it were, repressing and resisting, in every moment's suspension of vengeance, in every new expostulation, in every fresh gift of lingering kindness. His whole conduct was but a practical utterance of the pathetic pleading—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not

man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.”*

They were *earnest*. The *posture* or *attitude* expresses this—“All day long I *have stretched forth my hands* unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” A man may address another with earnestness of speech:—and he is still more impressed and urgent, when to earnestness of speech he adds earnestness of *attitude*—with outstretched arms imploring the object of his address to hear and to comply. This is what God does.† While stretching out His hands to implore,—He confirms His assurances of kindness and grace, and solicitude that sinners would, for their own sakes, listen to Him, by the solemnity of an oath—a divine oath—an oath by the certainty of His own existence—“Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”

They were *perseveringly importunate*. “All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.” It was not one warning, nor two. It was a continued course of admonition and entreaty. This was displayed in the wilderness.‡ It was equally displayed in after times. Jehovah “sent unto them all His servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them,” and saying by them, “Turn ye again now every one of you from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings.”§ The whole history of the Jews, indeed, is an unending illustration of this.

They were *disinterested*. When we hear of “calling” and “stretching out the hands” to another, we naturally think of some deep-felt want, or some suffered or dreaded evil; of which the supply is earnestly desired, or the endurance deprecated. A starving man stretches out his hand for food:—the oppressed for deliverance; the slave for freedom; the criminal for pardon; the victim of assassination for life.

* Hos. xi. 8, 9.

† Psa. lxxviii. 19, 20, 32—38, &c.

‡ Prov. i. 24.

§ Jer. xxv. 3—7.

But does God need any thing from His creatures? Was He at the bar of Israel, and needing their forgiveness? Was He requiring their aid to deliver Him from suffering, to protect Him in danger, to help Him through difficulties and trials? Ah no! *They* needed *Him*; not *He them*. The danger was on their part, not on His; the damage resulting from their refusal to hear Him, all their own. The sum of His entreaties is, “*Do thyself no harm*:”—and his kind assurance, in beseeching them to obey his voice—(tis as if the tear of pitying tenderness trembled in his eye, and the smile of paternal love played on His lip while he uttered it)—“*I will do you no hurt*.^{**} Far was it from his heart to do them hurt. Judgment was his strange work. Every entreaty was for their own good. His threatenings and His solicitations were alike in mercy.

But in what the Apostle here says, there is evidently an *implied consequence*—their utter destruction, if they persisted in impenitent disobedience to the voice of a beseeching God.[†] And when the Gospel is spoken of, as the final invitation—similar terms of threatening were employed by the prophets—“Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he

* Jer. xxv. 6.

† See Jer. vii. 13—16; xxvi. 2—6, &c.

may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.”*

“Did not Israel *know*,” then?—The intimations of Moses, and the plainer and bolder intimations of Isaiah, with those of the other Prophets, were abundantly sufficient to have made them aware of God’s purpose to cast them off from being his people, if they continued unbelieving and rebellious; to lay the temple of the Lord, then a “holy and beautiful house,” in ruins; to sweep their city with “the besom of destruction;” to scatter themselves, as “fugitives and vagabonds,” through all the earth; and to bring “wrath upon them to the uttermost”—wrath both in this life and that which is to come. The Apostle, therefore, in giving such intimations, directly or indirectly, does no more than had often been done before by those whom they acknowledged as inspired Prophets,—those “holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

Yet the wrath was not to be *perpetual*;—the rejection was not to be final. He was not to cast off for ever; to “forget to be gracious;” in “anger to shut up his tender mercies.” To the prospects still in reserve for the seed of Jacob the Apostle goes on to speak in the next chapter, the contents of which we must not anticipate.

Let me observe, in conclusion:—

1. How widely different ought our feelings to be from those of the unbelieving Jews, in witnessing the spread of the Gospel, and the admission of sinners of every nation to its privileges! Instead of jealousy, and disappointed pride, and fretfulness, and wrath, our feelings should be those of delight and joy—the delight and joy alike of piety and of benevolence. There is “joy in heaven,” there is joy on earth among all the heirs of heaven, “over one sinner that repenteth.”

* Isa. xxviii. 16—22. This accords with the words of the Saviour himself, Matt. xxiii. 34—39.

“The Lord of all is rich unto *all* that call upon him;” and the enlarged dispensation of His riches gladdens the hearts of all His people. He does not take from one to give to another. His riches are not a limited stock, which the more its participants multiply can only be shared by a minuter subdivision. They are “unsearchable riches,”—never diminished by giving:—and, instead of ungenerous grudging, when others are brought to share in them, every previous possessor feels a precious addition to his happiness. Let us not be like the elder son in the parable, who, in sullen anger at the reception of the recovered prodigal, would take no part in the scene of paternal and domestic rejoicing. It is “meet that we make merry and be glad,” when sinners, our brethren of the common family of man, who “were dead, are made alive again,”—and when those who were “lost are found:”—

“O! 'tis a scene of spreading mirth,
When sinners are forgiven:
It cheers the hearts of saints on earth,
And tunes the harps of heaven!”

As to the Jews themselves, who were thus “moved to jealousy,” and “provoked to anger,” by the calling of the Gentiles,—let us not ungenerously resent the usage. Let us rather return evil with good; earnestly seeking their salvation by using every means to draw their attention to the Gospel, and praying for the removal of the veil from their hearts, that they may learn to say, even of Him whom their fathers crucified—“Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!”—Let us rather think of what we owe to Jews, than cherish a grudge against them. Whatever we know and enjoy, and hope for, of spiritual and eternal blessings, we have received through their instrumentality. Let gratitude prompt us to pray for them, and to use every endeavour to bring them to a participation in the hitherto rejected blessings of Messiah’s reign.

2. Let me impress anew on the minds of sinners their guilt and danger, while hearing the invitations of the Gospel, and still living in estrangement from God. Alas! it is not of

the ancient Jews only that God's words which have been before us are true. Are there not many at this moment, to whom He might with equal truth say, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Yes, careless sinners—He addresses *you*. He pleads with you; He entreats you. His invitations to you are condescending, forbearing, earnest, persevering, disinterested. It is not a fellow-man, it is not an angel, it is not the most exalted of created beings, that expostulates with you: it is the infinite God! Think of the condescension. Think of the forbearance. It is the forbearance of a holy, sin-hating God. He hates your sins; but pities your souls;—and it is in pity to your souls that His "judgment lingers." It is this that keeps back His hand from smiting you, and that stretches it out in the attitude of kind entreaty. And think of His earnestness. It is the earnestness of one who cannot be mistaken in his estimate of the evil he warns you to shun. What must be the death you have to die, when God himself lifts up his beseeching voice, and stretches out the hand of entreaty to warn you to flee from it! And think of His persevering importunity. How long have you been spared? How often have you been warned? Are there none present who have been hearing the invitations of divine mercy from their childhood to this hour, and have never given them a cordial reception? in whose ears the voice of a beseeching God continues from Sabbath to Sabbath sounding its warnings and entreaties, and to whom He has still to say, "All the day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people?" How wonderful this patient importunity!—And remember, all is disinterested. It is for your own sakes, that God invites and entreats you. It is your own good He seeks. And if you persist in refusing Him, your own must be the loss. Your blood will be upon your own heads. He will say—"I called, and ye refused." No sinner will be able to say this to Him. No. He never refuses when sinners call. He is "rich unto ALL that call upon Him." He "waits to be gracious." He never disregards the cry for mercy. But it cannot be always thus. Hear, then,—and

hear *now*, while yet again sounds in your ear the inviting voice of God—the voice of authority, the voice of tender mercy—“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

* Isa. lv. 1.

LECTURE XLVIII.

ROMANS XI. 1—6.

“I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.”

THE question with which this chapter opens is evidently designed to express a very natural objection to what the Apostle had said respecting the rejection of the Jews; an objection which does not occur here for the first time, but which he had adverted to more than once before.

The Jews were Jehovah’s people, whom He had chosen from among the surrounding nations, and had taken into special covenant with Himself:—“Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; (for ye were the fewest of all people;) but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out

of the house of bond-men, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him, and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face."* In the very passage thus cited there is a distinction made between two descriptions of characters, those that "love" God and those that "hate" Him, and a corresponding distinction between His opposite modes of dealing with them. And this, in fact, when we consider the distinction as existing amongst Jews themselves, though all belonging to the separated nation,—all the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, is in truth the very distinction which Paul assumes as the basis of his vindication of God's faithfulness from the insinuation involved in the question—"Hath God cast away his people?"

What was His promise? "The Lord will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance."† How, then, was the statement of the Apostle in harmony with this promise? It might be answered, that in all God's covenant engagements with Israel, we find conditional stipulations, amounting in brief to the simple statement, "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."‡ Such declarations are frequent both in Moses and the prophets.—But the term "*cast away*" evidently includes more here than the mere dispossession of Canaan; even the final rejection which is consequent upon the refusal of the Gospel.§ It was unbelieving and impenitent Israel that, according to the Apostle, were to be "*cast off*." The question then was, Were these the people meant in the promises of God's covenant with Abraham respecting his seed? The Apostle assumes the negative. His principle or ground of vindication is the

* See Deut. vii. 6—10.

† Isa. i. 19, 20.

† Psa. xciv. 14.

‡ Chap. ix. 30—33; x. 16, 20, 21.

same with that adopted by him when he says, “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: that is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”* This distinction we formerly illustrated at large. The divine faithfulness can be bound only to the extent originally meant in the promise. The promise did not include all “Israel after the flesh;” and therefore could not be violated by the rejection of that part of the fleshly seed that were not the children of God,—and that were not spiritually the children of Abraham.—It is upon this principle that the Apostle indignantly rejects the imputation against the fidelity of God to His word: “God forbid.”†

What is the proof adduced by the Apostle in support of his denial? It is first *his own case*:—“For I also am an Israelite.” That by “*an Israelite*” he does not mean a spiritual Israelite, but simply a descendant of Jacob, is plain from his adding, not only “of the seed of Abraham,” but “of the tribe of Benjamin.”

I confess myself unable to give a consistent explanation of these words on any other principle than this—that although the promises in the covenant with Abraham were made with immediate reference to the spiritual seed, yet that there was in them a *primary respect* to the *seed according to the flesh*—that in fact the promises were “to the Jew first,” although “also to the Gentile.”

Two things indeed appear to follow from the words:—1. If there had not been a peculiar and primary respect in the promises of the covenant to the natural seed of Abraham, then the salvation of one belonging to the natural seed could never, with propriety, have been adduced as an appropriate

* Chap. ix. 6—8.

† Comp. chap. iii. 3, 4.

‡ That the Apostle presents his own case as *one in point* is the almost universal opinion; but Alford rejects it, though on grounds which appear extremely slender.—ED.

evidence that God “had *not* cast away his people.” The salvation of a Gentile would have been quite as much to the purpose; the “election” among the Gentiles being *God’s people* as well as among the Jews. The Apostle might have quoted the case of the Ethiopian eunuch or the Philippian jailer with as much conclusive effect as his own.—2. While there was a primary respect to the natural seed of those to whom the promises were made, these promises never implied that *all* who should descend from them by fleshly birth, should partake of the blessings. For of this, the salvation of an individual, or even of “a remnant,” however large, “according to the election of grace,” would have been a proof totally inconclusive.

And this idea of a primary respect to the natural seed, is in harmony with the whole phraseology of the Scriptures.* When we recollect what is so frequently repeated in the New Testament respecting the tidings of the Gospel as being “to the Jew first,” this and other similar passages are easily explained. The declaration was verified when Peter thus addressed the people of Israel, unbelieving as they were—“Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”† If there had been, in the promises, no such primary reference of peculiar regard to the natural seed, I am at a loss to conceive, in what sense the Jews addressed by Peter, who had no relation to Abraham but that “according to the flesh,” could be denominated the children of the covenant made with the fathers, not as containing the promise of temporal blessings only, but the promise of the “glorious gospel of the blessed God.”

Throughout the whole of this chapter we find the same primary respect to the natural seed clearly implied and even directly affirmed.

* See, in the way of example, Jer. xxxi. 31—33. † Acts iii. 25, 26.

The principle, however, of the vindication before us is, as has been said, the distinction between Israel “after the flesh,” and Israel “after the Spirit.” Hence the Apostle adds—“God hath not cast away his people *which he foreknew*.” For the full explanation of this expression, we must refer to the language of a preceding chapter—“Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”* This was not the case with *all* Abraham’s natural offspring. But it was to the “foreknown people” that the promises were made. And this being the case, there was no “unfaithfulness with God.” The promises held good in the full extent of their original meaning. If the objectors imagined that the people of Israel universally were God’s true people, because they appeared nationally as His church, separated for special purposes from the surrounding nations, they were in a grievous mistake.

He goes on to convince them of this by drawing a parallel between what had place now, and the state of things in the time of Elijah:—verses 2—4. “God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.”† The prayer was “*against Israel*,” inasmuch as it charged the people with crimes which deserved the divine judgments:—it is a *complaint* of them. The language of Elijah refers especially to the *ten tribes*. They “killed the prophets;” as in the case of Jezebel, who searched through “the thousands of Israel” to find them out, and put

* Chap. viii. 29, 30.

† The prayer or address of Elijah to Jehovah here referred to is in 1 Kings xix. 9—14; and the part of God’s oracular answer referred to is in verse 18.

them to death. They “digged down God’s altars:”—not the altar at Jerusalem. That was not in the power of the ten tribes. God appointed *one* altar for sacrifice—“Whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you, that offereth a burnt-offering or sacrifice, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the Lord, even that man shall be cut off from among his people.”* Yet, before the building of the temple, it appears as if some dispensation had been allowed as to this law.† Jehovah might grant a dispensation to the people of the ten tribes, to sacrifice on other altars when restrained by their ungodly princes from going up to worship at Jerusalem. These altars to the true God being a testimony against the prevailing idolatry, they were “digged down,” that no vestige of His worship might remain.

Among the other true prophets of Jehovah, Elijah was “sought after,” that the blood of this eminent saint and minister and patriot might further glut the sanguinary animosity of the wretched woman who then virtually, by her command over Ahab, swayed the sceptre of Israel:—“Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal, how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time.”‡

It was true, then, that his life was sought. But the expression on which Paul dwells particularly is—“*I am left alone.*” It seems as if Elijah meant, *alone of the prophets*: yet from “the answer of God unto him,” we must interpret his language more extensively. In 1 Kings xviii. 13 mention is made of a hundred prophets who had been for a time saved from the fury of Jezebel by the care of Obadiah. It is likely, however, that they had been afterwards discovered and slain:—else Elijah was ignorant of their preservation, and they must be included in the “seven

* Lev. xvii. 8, 9.—See also Deut. xii. 4—7.

† See 1 Sam. vii. 7; xi. 14, 15; xvi. 2, 5. with 1 Kings xviii. 30.

‡ 1 Kings xix, 1, 2.

thousand men" who in all Israel "had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." The greater likelihood is, that they had been exterminated.

The answer of God teaches us that Elijah's language was rash and unwarrantable. The corruption, though fearfully extensive, was not quite so universal as his apprehensions suggested. The number specified was among the ten tribes. There might be many more in Judah. And even as to the ten tribes, it expresses only the number of faithful worshippers *at the time*; by no means to be interpreted as implying that none of the rest,—none of those who *had* served the god of the Sidonians, were afterwards brought to repentance, and to return to Jehovah. We are no more under the necessity of supposing this, than we are under the necessity of supposing, that of those who did not at the time Paul wrote appear as belonging to the "remnant according to the election of grace" none were afterwards brought to the faith of Christ. We know that for the conversion of such Paul himself laboured and prayed, with all earnestness of desire and zeal.*

The language of Jehovah here is that of sovereign grace—"I have reserved unto myself." He set them apart for Himself, and then preserved them in their attachment to His name and worship, amid the abounding defection and idolatry. It was not that their dispositions were naturally better than those of others; that there was less of natural tendency to "depart from the living God" in them than in the rest. The difference was owing to the preventing and restraining grace of Jehovah—"I have reserved to myself seven thousand *men*." The word in the original is that which is generally used for *men*† in distinction from *women*. It may, for aught we can tell, have this proper and restricted sense here. This, however, is uncertain; as, though generally so used, it is not always.‡

The Apostle then pursues his object;—applying the state of Israel in Elijah's time to that of the Jews in his own:—verse 5. "Even so then at this present time also there is a

* Compare verses 13, 14.

† *αὐτοὶς* not *αὐτοῖςτοις*.—ED.

‡ e. g. Luke xi. 31, 32.

remnant according to the election of grace." There is *a remnant*—there is *a reserve*,* the word corresponding to the one used in the verse preceding.

What he said of their present state need not have so much surprised them. For similar had their state been before, as thus declared by God himself, which they might have known and recollect—"*Wot ye not?*" Are ye ignorant of what is so pointedly stated in that instance, and what pervades your whole history—that there has always been a true spiritual people in Israel in the midst of much unbelief and disobedience and rejection of the Most High; in the midst even of a large majority of aliens in heart—of children of Abraham by birth but not by faith and character? This was *always* the case. They never were all Israel who were of Israel. But God always had, now has, and ever will have a spiritual seed amongst the natural offspring of Abraham. Even the present apostate and outcast race are "*beloved for the fathers' sakes*," and promises of merciful visitation remain to be verified in their behalf.

Paul was himself one of the chosen "remnant." He did not, like Elijah, fancy himself "left alone." There was a goodly number included in the remnant of the saved—not seven thousand merely, but many ten thousands.†—This remnant, like the other, was "*according to the election of grace*"—i. e. of God's free favour and choice, among the equally undeserving.‡

As we go on, you will observe, it becomes increasingly manifest that the Apostle, through his whole discourse and argument, is not speaking of a *national* but of a *personal* election. Here, as before, it is a choice, not between Jews

* λειμμα.

† Acts xxi. 20. The word rendered "thousands" in the authorized version is μυριάδες. The expression has led to a suspicion that ταῦ πεντετεύκοταν in the verse is spurious, but without the slightest ground. Origen allows that there might be 144 thousand of believing Jews; and Eusebius quotes language from Hegesippus which would indicate a still more extensive reception of the truth.—ED.

‡ This was largely illustrated on the ninth chapter, especially verses 15, 16.—ED.

and Gentiles, but between Jews and Jews; nor is it, therefore, election to *privilege* merely—for in that respect the Jews were all on a footing:—it is election to *salvation*.

The *sixth* verse does not seem necessary to the argument. But the introduction of it shows us how strongly the doctrine of the absolute freeness of Gospel grace was impressed on the Apostle's own mind, and how solicitous he was to convey the same impression to the minds of others. It was with him the first principle of the Gospel; its most essential element; without which its very nature would be destroyed and the appropriateness of its title done away. Grace is the turning point of difference between the Gospel and every other system. On this point we must not yield one inch of our ground; for, to give up grace is to give up the Gospel. We might as well speak of maintaining *the Law* when we have yielded to the adversary its first and fundamental principle of supreme love to God, as speak of maintaining the Gospel when we have yielded the perfect gratuitousness of all its provisions and blessings. Love is not a more essentially pervading element of the Law than grace is of the Gospel. It is our duty to give this all its prominence. It will delight the humble-minded children of God, who have learned the true spirit of the Gospel, and felt in themselves that “by the grace of God they are what they are;” and, if it should ever so much irritate and disgust the pride of the natural mind in the unregenerate children of this world, we must not on that account keep it back or modify and mitigate its statements. Paul was all zeal for this article of truth; firmly denying that there was any Gospel without it. We are quite willing to bear the reproach of illiberality and uncharitableness, if it be in company with an inspired Apostle. *His* language, in regard to those who were for striking a compromise between grace and works, and for mixing something of their own with the finished work of the Redeemer—is alarmingly peremptory—“Let him be Anathema.”*

* Gal. i. 6—9.

In harmony with this is his language here:—"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."* This is true philosophy. How simple the argument! The principle of it is—the obvious and perfect contrariety between *grace* and *works*. They are utterly and irreconcilably at variance. The one is *favour without merit*; the other is *merit without favour*. The introducing of grace destroys works; the introducing of works destroys grace. There can be no compromise between them. They cannot, in any way, combine in the production of the same effect. It is not merely said—*So far as it is of grace, it is not of works; and so far as it is of works, it is not of grace*. In the divine philosophy of Paul, such a statement would have been scouted, as a contradiction in terms. *He* exhibits the blessing of which he speaks—the blessing of *election*—(and it may be regarded as, in this respect, the representative of all the blessings of salvation) as being necessarily, either entirely of the one, or entirely of the other.

Grace does not *eke out* human merit, but utterly and in every shape *excludes* it. The law of works, and the law of faith—the one saying "*Do and live*," the other "*Believe and live*," are opposites in their very elementary principles. The Bible doctrine is the only true and consistent philosophy of human nature, and of human responsibility. Man is a sinner; as a sinner, he is guilty; as guilty, he is justly condemned; as justly condemned, he must be a debtor for pardon and life to sovereign mercy. There must be no stipulation by the sinner for a part of the work, a part of the merit, a part of the honour; but an entire and humble-minded *giving-in* to God—pleading guilty and casting himself unreservedly and thankfully on the *mercy* revealed in the Gospel—free, unconditional mercy—"grace reigning through righteousness

* The genuineness of the latter half of this verse is questionable. It does not affect the sense. The thought comes clearly out in the former part.—ED.

unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* This is the plain, unaccommodating doctrine of the Gospel. It must be received as it stands, or at once rejected. Grace is offered:—and the sinner must accept it as it is offered, or perish. He is not to assume the attitude of one who has something to say for himself, and try to drive a bargain with his Maker,—to get some abatement of the mortifying terms;—some little acknowledgment, that shall spare him the degradation of owing *all* to mercy. He who indulges such a fancy *insults* his God. We dare not for the sake of gratifying the ignorant and vain presumption of a polluted worm of the earth, consent to compromise the awful dignity, the unsullied honour of the Eternal Throne. The God of justice has pronounced your sentence of condemnation:—the God of mercy offers you free remission and gracious acceptance on the ground of his Son’s righteousness and sacrifice. If you will neither own the righteousness of the sentence, nor accept the favour which mercy offers, on the ground on which the offer is made, there is no alternative but perdition; and your blood will be upon your own heads; God, and Christ, and the Gospel, will be clear of it—and oh! that we who profess to preach that Gospel may be found clear of it too! I close with one or two practical reflections:—

1. Let all beware of practising upon themselves a similar delusion to that which deceived and ruined Israel “after the flesh.” They were the chosen and peculiar people of God. Yet even among them there was but “a remnant” of the saved. They “were not all Israel who were of Israel.” If such was *their* case, how foolish the idea of a *Christian nation*, and how vain the confidence that is placed in belonging to it! Such confidence is much more foolish than that of the Jews, who really were, as a nation, by external separation and institutes of worship, the church of God. If ever the members of a community had reason, as such, to rely on their peculiarities and privileges, the Jews had. If even their confidence was delusive and worthless, how much more the

* Chap. iv. 4—8; Gal. ii. 15—21.

confidence of those who fancy themselves Christians of course because they are Britons—members of what is called a Christian community, duly baptized, and attentive, it may be, to the religious institutions of their country. This is the amount of what many mean by being a Christian. But the confidence is all baseless together. There is, and there can be, no such thing as a Christian nation. That kingdom which is not of this world can never be national. “Behold the kingdom of God is *within you*.” Its subjects consist of such as know, believe, love, and obey, the Gospel, such as have been “renewed in the spirit of their mind,” “brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” It is the peremptory declaration of the divine Lord of this kingdom—“*YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN.*”* In Britain, therefore, as of old in Israel, there is but “a remnant,”—fore-known of God, *called* by His grace, and kept to life eternal. *Such* God will not “cast away;” but will keep them by His power “through faith unto salvation.”†

Equally delusive is external connexion with any *Church* as a foundation for confidence. Let it be ever so corrupt, or let it be ever so pure, it matters not: mere outward visible association with even the purest communion of saints on earth, will be of no avail to any one, unless he be himself personally a partaker of the grace of God. Religion is a *personal* thing. The faith of the Gospel and renovation of heart are *personal* things. We cannot be ourselves believers, and “new creatures,” by being externally associated with such, in however close and intimate fellowship. The salvation of those with whom we stand connected will not be *our* salvation. The precious and the vile must at last be separated. The fire that leaves untouched (save to purify them) the “gold and silver and precious stones,” shall ultimately consume the “wood and hay and stubble.” The connexion in which the one may have been with the other, as it does not change its nature, cannot deliver it from the burning. The great question is,—and it must of necessity be a question

* John iii. 7.

† John x. 27—30.

in determining which you must think of yourselves alone, and yourselves in presence of the Omniscient and Holy One —whether you belong to the “remnant according to the election of grace.” And to determine this, it is vain for you to dream of entering the mind of God, and reading its secrets. These are beyond you. But here is God’s word. Here is the faith—here the character of His chosen. “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” and does thy faith “work by love, purify the heart, overcome the world,” and lead thee to “live to him who died for thee and rose again?”*

2. Let us beware of rash conclusions respecting the number of God’s people. Elias spoke in ignorance. So may we. “Seven thousand!” alas! how small a proportion to the many myriads of Israel! How disheartening and appalling the thought that so vast a majority should have been living without God, and making privilege only subserve their condemnation!—Yet small as the remnant was, how far was it beyond the desponding fears of the prophet! There are few things more distressing and heart-sinking than in passing along the streets of our crowded city, to have the thought come vividly across the mind—how small a proportion of the multitudes that form this flux and reflux of an ever busy population, are attending to the things that belong unto their peace, and are in a state of preparation for eternity!—Yet, disheartening as the thought is, may not the case before us teach us caution. Vast as is the disproportion between those who serve God and those who serve Him not, we may in moments of despondency, greatly *under-rate* the amount of the former. The chosen remnant are to be found sometimes in the most unlikely situations, and under the most unpromising appearances; and the number may be far larger than we are aware. A benevolent spirit must be desirous to make the number as large as regard to *the truth* will allow. Of *that* we must never lose sight—and never by a false charity, extend the boundary beyond the Bible limits of safety; and for the sake of pleasing a well-meaning but sickly sentiment-

* 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

alism, dishonour God, and endanger the souls of men. Nor must we, because the true people of God are to be found in the most corrupt communions,—even in the church of Rome itself,—allow ourselves to think lightly of corruption, or to be indifferent about its removal!

3. Observe one of the leading marks of distinction between the remnant of God's chosen and the world, whether professing Christianity or not. God's true Israel acknowledge, with all their hearts, the *grace* of God as the sole origin of their salvation. This is the first feature in the Christian character. We dare not deceive the souls of other men, and endanger our own, by yielding one jot in this point. Let men speculate as they will about varieties of doctrine—they may *overrate* or *underrate* their relative importance,—here is one ground on which we take our stand, and from which we cannot shift. Every member of the true Israel of God must be, in his own conviction and confession, *a debtor to grace*. He who spurns the idea of owing *all to grace*—all his salvation from first to last,—from the first breathing of spiritual life in the soul to the full fruition of heavenly perfection and glory,—is yet a stranger to that salvation. This is not a mere doctrine, or matter of sentiment:—the feeling of *obligation to grace* is the first principle of the divine life in the soul, the animating and pervading impulse of the entire character of the “new creature.” And, be it remembered, all who in sincerity and in earnest make the acknowledgement in words, will show the practical hold which the sentiment has in their hearts and consciences, by “walking in newness of life.” He is a stranger to the grace of the Gospel—be his professions what they may—who talks of grace but lives in sin;—who calls himself God's, but walks with the world; who “names the name of Christ, but does not depart from iniquity.”*

* Titus ii. 11—14

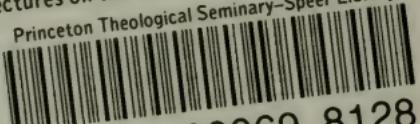
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